



Words to Know

When using the RAISE work tools, you might see words or ideas you don't recognize.

You can learn more about many of those words and ideas here. This document explains what they mean and gives examples.

You can look for a word in this document in two different ways:

1. Using the find command.

If you already know the word you're looking for, you can press Control + F (on a Windows computer) or Command + F (on an Apple computer), then type in the word you're looking for.

If you're using a mobile device, look for a magnifying glass icon in the application you use to view PDFs.

2. Using the table of contents.

The table of contents lists every word alphabetically. You can click on any word or idea to go to its definition.

Some words or ideas have multiple names. For example, the "Americans with Disabilities Act" is also called the "ADA." Both of those names are listed together.

Some words or ideas are related to COVID-19. Those words are labeled with a * symbol.

If you see a **bold word** in a definition, you can click on it to jump to its definition, too.



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* Quarantine

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Vocational training or, Vocational school or, Trade school	Volunteering

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Wages	Work incentives
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A

Ableism (A)

A kind of **discrimination** against disabled people.

When disabled people don't get things that they need (like medical care) or deserve (like a job promotion) because of their disability, that is ableism.

Example:

Janine has cerebral palsy. Her voice sounds different from people who do not have cerebral palsy. Janine can do the job she applied for, but when the interviewer hears her speak, they decide they don't want to hire her. This is a kind of ableism.

Refusing to hire someone because they are disabled is illegal under the **ADA**.

When disabled people are treated differently than non-disabled people, that is ableism.

Example:

Malik is an adult who uses a wheelchair. When people see Malik using their wheelchair, they treat Malik like a child, even though Malik is an adult. This is a kind of ableism.



Accommodations (A)

Changes made so that a disabled person can do something that they couldn't do without changes.

Sometimes, the change is made to the environment, or world around you.

Example:

Hannah's chronic illness makes her sensitive to heat. Her office is kept at a temperature that is okay for her coworkers, but too hot for Hannah. She talks to HR, who agrees to pay for a fan for Hannah's office.

HR tells Hannah that if the fan doesn't seem to work, they can talk about other solutions, like changing the temperature for the whole office, or getting Hannah her own room with its own thermostat.

Sometimes, the change is made to the way people do things.

Example:

Priya has a developmental disability. Sometimes, she forgets what she was working on, and needs to be reminded. Priya's coworkers know that she needs to be reminded sometimes. Every so often, someone checks in on Priya to help her stay on track. (This kind of accommodation is called a **natural support**.)

Administration for Community Living (A)

ACL

An organization run by the government that helps people with disabilities and older adults to keep living and working in their communities.



American Job Centers (A)

AJCs

A place where people can help you find jobs, get training for jobs, or answer other questions you have about jobs.

You can find an AJC near you at [this link](#).

Americans with Disabilities Act (A)

ADA

A law that was passed in 1990 protecting the rights of **people with disabilities**.

Before the ADA, disabled people did not have rights under the law. People could choose whether or not they wanted to treat people with disabilities fairly.

Businesses have to pay attention to what the ADA says about disabled people. Most of what they need to know is in the first part of the law, called **Title I**.

If you want to learn more about the ADA, you can read more about it in plain language or Easy Read format [here](#), in a report from the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network.

Application (A)

Introducing yourself to an **employer**, and telling them you would be interested in working for them.

Applications usually include a **resume** and a form to fill out. Sometimes you will be asked for a **cover letter**. Sometimes people ask for a **CV** instead of a resume.



Apprenticeships (A)

A kind of job training where you can learn **trade skills** while **on the job**.

An apprentice picks a trade they want to do for a living. They take some classes, but mostly, they follow someone who is already a master at their job, and learn as they work. Apprentices get paid a little money as they learn and work.

Example:

Ben has a **GED**. He wants to be an electrician. He applies to an electrician apprenticeship near his home, and gets accepted.

Ben meets Lisa, who has been an electrician for 15 years. Some days, Lisa takes him to work with her and teaches him as they work. Ben gets paid for the work he does with Lisa.

Some days, Ben goes to class instead of work with Lisa. He takes math and science classes to learn more about the work he will be doing. Ben gets paid during class, too.

Ben works as an apprentice for 4 years. Then, Ben applies for his **occupational license**. Now he can work as an electrician **full-time**.



Assessment (A)

A test or decision process.

People who work with disabled people often use the word “assessment” to mean “figuring out what a person needs and wants.”

Example:

Mateo wants to get a job, so he goes to his local **vocational rehabilitation** center for help. His VR counselor, Ayesha, tells him that they are going to start with an assessment.

During the assessment, Ayesha asks him questions about himself, like what he likes and doesn't like to do. She also asks him questions about his disability, and makes sure he is getting the medical care he needs.

When Ayesha is done with the assessment, she has some ideas about the kinds of jobs Mateo might be good at. She also has some ideas about what kinds of **accommodations** might help Mateo at work.



Assistive technology (A) AT

A tool that helps a disabled person do a task or activity.

Some kinds of AT are freely available. Some kinds of AT are sold at stores. Some kinds of AT are prescribed by doctors. Some kinds of AT can come from working with your workplace or VR center.

Example:

Maria is blind. She uses a screen reader on her computer and her phone to hear what is on the screen.

Example:

Jamila is dyslexic. At the office, she uses speech-to-text software to help her write emails and reports.

The voice recognition isn't always perfect, so sometimes Jamila types instead. The word processing software she uses has a spell checker.

Both speech-to-text software and the spell checker are assistive technology.

Example:

Skylar is autistic. Noise distracts them and makes them anxious. When they work in the office, they use a pair of noise-canceling headphones so they can work in silence.



Associate's degree (A)

A kind of **degree** you can get at a **post-secondary school**, like a community college, college, or university.

Associate's degrees usually take 2 years to earn.

Sometimes, people get associate's degrees as one step towards a **bachelor's degree**, which takes longer to earn.

Sometimes, people get an associate's degree, and then go directly to work.

Not all jobs require an associate's degree. Some jobs are okay with a **GED or high school diploma**.



B

Bachelor's degree (B)

A kind of **degree** you can get at a **post-secondary school**, like a community college, college, or university.

Bachelor's degrees usually take 4 years to earn.

Some jobs require at least a bachelor's degree, but not all of them. It's a good idea to check the job posting to see what the employer is looking for.

Benefits (B)

Two different things might be called "benefits."

1. Important services that come from working at some jobs.

Everyone gets paid a **salary** or **wages** for working at a job. Some jobs, usually **full time** jobs, also provide extra services called benefits.

Those services might include things like medical insurance, a retirement fund that helps you save for when you aren't working at a job anymore, or free access to education or training.

Just like it's important to know how much money an employer is offering you to work for them, it's important to know if they are offering benefits, and what those benefits are. Ask about benefits before you accept a job (but remember that not all jobs offer benefits).

2. Support that comes from the federal or state government.

Some benefits, like **SSI** or **SSDI**, help you earn money if you are disabled and have a hard time working to earn money.

Some benefits, like Medicaid, help you get insurance if you can't afford it or get it through an employer.

Some benefits, like SNAP (food stamps), help you afford certain important things, like food.



C

* (C)Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

* CDC

A group of scientists that work for the U.S. government. They tell people what to do during public health emergencies, like the **COVID-19** pandemic.

Centers for Independent Living (C)

CILs

Groups that are funded by the government, but are led by people with disabilities. They help disabled people reach their **independent living** goals.

You can reach out to your local CIL for help with all kinds of things, like housing, **assistive technology**, **self-advocacy**, and searching for jobs.

You can find your local CIL [here](#), or, if you prefer plain text, [here](#).

Commuting (C)

Moving between home and work.

When looking for a job, it helps to think about the commute. Some people can't drive, and might need to take public transit, like the bus. Some people get tired from being in the car for a long time, and might not have enough energy for work after a long commute. Some people need to work from home. (These people might choose to work **remotely** and **telecommute!**)



Competitive integrated employment (C) CIE

Fair conditions at work for disabled people.

Competitive work pays disabled people fairly. Disabled people should be paid at least **minimum wage**, and they should make as much money as a non-disabled person doing the same work. They should also get the same **benefits**.

Integrated work means disabled people and non-disabled people work together, and are treated the same.

Disabled people should also be able to do the kind of work they want to do, not work that they are forced to do.

One law lets businesses get away with treating disabled people unfairly at work in places like **sheltered workshops**. People who believe that CIE is important are fighting this law.

You can read more about CIE in plain language or Easy Read format [here](#), in a report from the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network.

Contractor (C)

A worker who agrees to do a job for a set price. They sign a contract, or agreement, so that everyone knows what to expect.

Even though contractors work for people, they aren't considered **employees** of those people. They are **self-employed**.

Some contractors are called **freelancers**.

A lot of **self-advocates** work as contractors, because things like speaking opportunities are often contract work.



Cover letter (C)

A letter you write to someone who is looking for **employees**, telling them who you are, why you want the job, and why you would be good at the job.

A cover letter is different from a **resume**, and different from a **CV**. Instead of being a list of your experiences, a cover letter is a personal way to connect with someone who might want to hire you.

Not all jobs require a cover letter. Check the job posting to see what they are looking for.

* COVID-19 (C)

* Coronavirus

A disease that has infected and killed many people all over the world (a “pandemic”). It is caused by a germ called a coronavirus, which is related to the viruses that cause colds and the flu.

It is very contagious: it’s easy to catch and pass on to other people.

COVID-19 can make people very sick. It can make it hard to breathe. Some people with COVID-19 need to go to the hospital to get help to breathe.

There are now **vaccines** against COVID.

Cultural competency (C)

Being knowledgeable about cultures other than your own, and being able to adapt to new cultural ideas easily and respectfully.

Cultural competency is an important skill for everyone, but especially in jobs where you work with other people, including customers or coworkers, who might come from other cultures.

Some services, like **vocational rehabilitation**, also try to be culturally competent. People from different cultures need and want different things when they get help. So, culturally competent services try to think about the culture we come from when they help us.



Customized employment (C)

A service provided by **vocational rehabilitation** when a job that would fit the job seeker doesn't exist yet.

To make a job that fits the job seeker, VR can do things like **job carving** or **job creation**.

CV (C)

A list of your accomplishments and experience that helps **employers** understand who you are and what you can do.

Most jobs ask for a **resume**, not a CV, but if you are applying to be a doctor or a professor, you might be asked for a CV.

CVs are longer than resumes. They include things like presentation experience, publications, or classes you have taught.

CV stands for "curriculum vitae," which means "course of life" in Latin, but most people just say "CV."



D

Disability ([D](#))

A condition that affects someone's ability to live in the world the same way as a non-disabled person.

The **ADA** defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits the ability to perform one or more major life activity” like walking or showering.

Disability is complicated, and definitions don't always tell us the whole story. Whether or not someone is disabled is up to them.

Example:

Milo has ADHD. He has trouble focusing on tasks and staying organized. Milo identifies as disabled.

Milo's sister Casey has ADHD, too. Casey doesn't call herself disabled. Casey might change her mind later. For now, it is important to respect Casey's choice.

Example:

Anne spent most of her life identifying as non-disabled. One day, she notices strange symptoms and goes to the doctor. After a lot of tests, Anne is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Over time, Anne's illness changes what she can and cannot do. Anne begins to identify as disabled.

Example:

Ji-hwan has cerebral palsy. He uses a motorized wheelchair and a communication device to speak. He needs help caring for himself each day. Ji-hwan identifies as disabled.

Example:

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Nina was born Deaf. Her parents are Deaf, too. She is part of the Deaf community.

Legally, Nina is considered to have a disability, because she is not able to hear like someone who isn't deaf. The **ADA** applies to Nina, and she can get support from disability groups if she wants.

But Nina and her parents do not identify as disabled. They identify as part of the Deaf community. They speak ASL (American Sign Language). To them, being Deaf is much more like being someone who doesn't speak English in America.

Nina's friend Diana is Deaf, too. Diana speaks ASL with Nina. Diana identifies as disabled and Deaf.



Disclosure (D)

Telling your **employer** that you have a disability.

Most of the time, you can choose whether or not you want to tell your employer about your disability.

If you need any **accommodations** at work, you have to tell your employer about your disability. You can do this when you are getting hired, or when you already have the job.

If an employer gets money from the federal government, they will ask you if you self-identify as disabled when you are applying for the job. You don't have to say yes, even if you have a disability, but you can if you want to.

Example:

Jesse has a chronic illness and knows he will need accommodations to do his best work. But he's worried that he won't get hired if he discloses that he has a disability. That kind of **discrimination** is illegal, but it can still happen.

Jesse waits until he is hired. He tells his supervisor about his chronic illness, and that he thinks he would do better work **remotely**. His supervisor helps him contact **HR**.

Jesse explains to HR that he works better when he can work in his own space and when he can take breaks to deal with his symptoms. HR agrees that this is a **reasonable accommodation**. Jesse's doctor sends a letter supporting Jesse's request. Now Jesse can work from home.



Discrimination (D)

When someone is treated unfairly because of who they are, or because of who other people think they are.

People can be discriminated against for all kinds of reasons, like their race, gender, sexuality, or whether or not they speak English. People can also be discriminated against for being disabled, or even just for “looking disabled.” This kind of discrimination is called **ableism**.

Example:

Jon isn't autistic, but the interviewer thinks he “looks autistic” and tells him that they don't want to hire “people like him.” Jon doesn't get the job because the interviewer thinks he “looks autistic.” This is discrimination, even though Jon isn't autistic. This is illegal.

Eloise is autistic and **discloses** her disability to the interviewer. The interviewer tells her that they “aren't hiring autistic people.” Eloise didn't get the job because the interviewer heard she was autistic. This is discrimination, and it is illegal.

The **ADA** protects people from discrimination based on disability or perceived disability. That means that Eloise, who is disabled, and Jon, who isn't disabled, are both protected by the ADA.

Diploma (D)

A certificate that is proof you finished education up to a certain level.

You can get a high school diploma, or a different certificate called a **GED**.

If you get a degree at a community college, college, or university, you can get a diploma that says you have an **associate's degree**, a **bachelor's degree**, a **Master's degree**, a **PhD**, or another kind of degree.



E

Eligibility (E)

Some programs have rules about who can participate in them. These programs have to check that you and your situation fit their program.

Example:

Medicaid is a **benefits** program that helps poor people and people with disabilities get health insurance. Not everyone can get Medicaid. You must be eligible in order to get Medicaid.

To be eligible, you have to be in a specific kind of situation. You have to tell Medicaid about your situation. The workers at Medicaid have to check that the information is correct. If everything follows Medicaid's rules, then you can get Medicaid.

Employee (E)

Someone who works for someone else.

Example:

Rio takes care of Anya's children while Anya is at work. Rio is Anya's employee.

Example:

Kiki is the manager at an electronics store. Kiki is an employee of the company that owns the electronics store.



Employer (E)

Someone who hires people to work for them.

Example:

Rio takes care of Anya's children while Anya is at work. Anya is Rio's employer.

Example:

Kiki is the manager at an electronics store. The electronics store is Kiki's employer.

Employment (E)

Employed

If you have a job that pays you to do work, you are employed.

You might also hear people say that you "have employment," or "have secured employment."

Employment First (E)

A belief that disabled people deserve to have jobs that they enjoy and that pay them fairly, just like non-disabled people.

People who support Employment First argue that money for services for people with disabilities should be used to help people with disabilities get jobs.

You can read more about Employment First in plain language [here](#).



F

Financial assistance (F)

Financial aid

Help that you get when you can't afford to pay for something on your own. Someone else agrees to help you pay for it.

For example, **vocational rehabilitation** can help you afford assistive technology or education.

Or, if you go to college, you might apply for financial aid to pay for tuition.

Freelance work (F)

Freelancing

When a person works for themselves, and offers their work in small pieces to **employers** who are looking for it. They are called **contractors** instead of **employees**.

Normally, employees are hired by employers, who take care of things like taxes, invoices, setting hours, and other organizational work. Freelancers do all of this by themselves, which can be complicated.

But, working for yourself means that you might have more freedom and flexibility. You might be able to choose where, when, and for how long you work.

Disabled people who want a lot of flexibility and are okay with doing their own organizational work might want to consider freelance work.

Freelancers are **self-employed**.

Full time (F)

When you work more than 30 hours a week, or more than 130 hours a month. If you're not sure, check the job posting, or ask your **employer**.

Usually, full time jobs include **benefits**.



G

GED (G)

A certificate that says you got as much education as someone with a high school **diploma**.

Most jobs, but not all, expect people to have at least a high school diploma or GED.

GED stands for General Educational Development. But everyone just calls it a GED.

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H

Hard skills ([H](#))

The skills that are part of your job description. Usually, these are tasks you do, not social skills (unless social skills are part of your job description, like they might be for a waiter or manager).

Hard skills are different from **soft skills**.

Example:

Jake is a carpenter. At work, he needs to make measurements, carry heavy objects, choose the right tool, and use tools safely. Those are some of his hard skills.

* High-risk ([H](#))

Someone who is more likely than other people to get very sick with **COVID-19**.

High-risk people are more likely to need to go to the hospital, to need help breathing, or to die from COVID-19.

Most disabled people are at higher risk than non-disabled people, especially if they have multiple disabilities, disabilities that affect their immune system, or disabilities that affect their breathing.

The **CDC** has a list of what conditions might make someone high-risk [here](#).

Being high-risk might change the decisions you make about working.

See also **risk**.

Hiring ([H](#))

When an **employer** agrees to accept someone as an **employee**.

When you are hired, you have a job.

The hiring process usually includes an **application** and an **interview**.



Human resources [\(H\)](#)

HR

Part of a business that helps manage people in the company.

Usually, HR manages **accommodations**. You can also talk to HR if you are having trouble with someone else at your job.



* Immune system (1)

The part of our body that helps us fight germs.

Doctors recommend that we use **vaccines** to help strengthen our immune systems.

* Immunocompromised (1)

When someone has a condition that makes their **immune system** weak. They will have more trouble fighting germs.

Immunocompromised people get sick more easily than other people. They might be more likely to get very sick and need more help from doctors and hospitals.

People can be immunocompromised for many reasons, like:

- Getting treated for cancer
- Had an organ transplant
- Taking certain medicines
- Have an autoimmune condition

You should know if you or someone in your life is immunocompromised. If you aren't sure, you can ask.



Independent living [\(I\)](#)

A belief that disabled people deserve to make decisions about their own lives, to participate in their communities, and to live fulfilling lives, like non-disabled people do.

The independent living movement, where disabled people demanded these rights, started in the 1960s. Activists who believed in independent living helped us get civil rights, like the **ADA** in 1990.

Today, we have **Centers for Independent Living**, led by disabled people who believe in these rights.

Indigenous [\(I\)](#)

A word that describes people who have ancestors who lived in the Americas before other people arrived here from places like Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Indigenous people in the United States come from many different cultures, nations, and tribes. They might identify as Native American, American Indian, First Nations, Native Alaskan, or Native Hawaiian.

Some programs, like **VR** and **AJCs**, have special programs for indigenous people looking for jobs. These programs are **culturally competent**. They work directly with nations and tribes to be better at helping indigenous people.

Individualized Plan for Employment [\(I\)](#)

IPE

A plan that you make with your **vocational rehabilitation** counselor about who you are, what you want in a job, and how you are going to get it.

If you get VR, your VR counselor will talk to you about your plans for getting a job. Everything in your plan is included in the IPE: what services you will get, who else will help you, how you can tell you're making progress, and many other details.

An IPE is different from an IEP, which is a plan for **accommodations** in elementary, middle, or high school.



Integration (I) Integrated

When two groups that used to be kept apart are together in the same space, with the same rights.

An integrated workplace is one where disabled and non-disabled people work together on the same team.

A workplace is not integrated if all of the workers are disabled and all of the supervising staff are non-disabled.

Example:

Bella has an **intellectual disability**. She works in an office. Some of Bella's coworkers are not disabled, but some are disabled. She works in an integrated workplace.

Bella used to go to a **day program**, where she only worked with other people with intellectual disabilities. The only non-disabled people she got to talk to were staff. The day program was not an integrated workplace.



Intellectual and developmental disabilities (I)

I/DD

Disabilities that affect the way someone learns, thinks, and adapts to change.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities usually need more help than other people dealing with life and big changes. Finding and keeping a job might be extra hard for someone with an I/DD.

Even someone with an I/DD who needs a lot of help taking care of themselves can still have a job.

Example:

Maya is autistic and has Down syndrome. She needs help planning and making decisions. She gets tired after a few hours of work. She likes familiar, repetitive work, and she loves plants.

Maya worked with a **VR** counselor and a team of people she trusts to find a job at a local nursery. Every day, Maya takes care of the plants in a section of the nursery. Maya works.

Example:

Anish has cerebral palsy. He needs a lot of help to take care of himself, and has a full-time **personal assistant**. He uses a speech-generating device to communicate.

He works at a national disability advocacy organization. Anish writes to politicians to help them make fair decisions about disabled people. Anish works.

Example:

Oona has an intellectual disability. She uses picture boards to communicate. Oona makes sculptures. She doesn't like talking to people, but she works with a team of people she trusts to sell her artwork. Oona works.

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Internships (I)

Programs that help you get work experience. You work for an **employer**, who asks you to do smaller tasks while you get used to the workplace and what they do.

Internships help you get used to the way a certain workplace feels. They look good on a **resume**, because employers know you have real-world experience with the work.

Sometimes, an internship can lead to a **part-time** or **full-time** job at the same company. This depends on whether or not a job is available, and if the company feels like you are a good fit.

Many internships are unpaid. That means you do work for free. Make sure you check whether or not you will be paid for your internship.

Interview (I)

A conversation with an **employer**, part of the **hiring** process.

The employer learns more about you, including what you have done before, what you're good at, what you struggle with, and why you're interested in working with them.

You get to learn more about the employer, too. During an interview, you can ask any questions you have about the job and the company.



* Isolation (1)

Staying separate from other people when you are sick with **COVID-19**.

If you are sick with symptoms of COVID-19, you should self-isolate for at least 5 days after your symptoms start.

If you tested positive for COVID-19, even if you don't have any symptoms, you should self-isolate for at least 5 days after you got your test result.

If you can, stay in a room without other people. If you need to be around other people, wear a mask. Tell your support people and your doctor that you are self-isolating.

RAISE

J

Job carving (J)

A kind of **customized employment**.

A **VR** counselor talks to a local **employer** about their needs. Sometimes, current **employees** are doing extra tasks, when they could be focusing on something they're really good at. Job carving takes those extra tasks away from current employees, and gives them to the person looking for work.

Example:

Misha has a cognitive disability. They like doing lots of different small tasks. Misha's VR counselor helped to carve a job at a local office building, where Misha helps sort files, replace materials, and tidy the area. They follow a list of tasks every day.

Having Misha keep the office organized means that the other workers can focus on other tasks.

Job coach (J)

A support person who helps you get ready to work.

A job coach might give you private lessons so you know what to expect at work. They might help you practice job tasks. They might talk to you about things that make you anxious, so you feel good about going to work.

A job coach might even come to work with you to help you get comfortable.

Usually, you'll only work with a job coach until you feel confident by yourself. But sometimes, job coaches stay with you, as part of **supported employment**.

RAISE

Job creation ([J](#))

A kind of **customized employment**.

A **VR** counselor talks to a local **employer** about their needs. Sometimes, the company is working fine, but thinks they could work even better if they had a new service available for employees. VR works with the company to create a new job that fits the job seeker and the company's needs.

Example:

Aleah has an **intellectual disability**. A local small business hires her to be in charge of their mail. Every day, Aleah sorts and delivers the mail. She enjoys the work, and the local business has a much easier time keeping track of their mail.

Job placement ([J](#))

Figuring out the best job for you, based on your strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, skills, needs, and goals.

You might do this by yourself, or you might get help from counselors at school, **VR** counselors, or someone at a **CIL** or **AJC**.

Job preparedness ([J](#))

Being ready for a job.

Of course you need to know how to do the work you were hired to do, but you also need to know what kind of behavior people expect from you in a workplace, how to deal with problems if they come up, how to get to your workplace, how to deposit your paycheck, and other things that may be new to you.

Job preparedness is a big part of the services offered by many places that help disabled people get jobs, like **VR**.

RAISE

Job advancement [\(J\)](#)

Getting rewarded for doing a good job at work.

Sometimes, you will keep the same job and responsibilities, but you will get paid more. This often happens when you have been doing the same job for a while.

Sometimes, you might get asked if you want to accept more responsibilities. This is called a promotion. This means that your **employer** trusts you to do good work, and wants you to do even more good work. You'll get paid more, and you might get better benefits. You can decide whether or not you want to accept these new responsibilities.

People with disabilities have the right to job advancement just like people without disabilities.



L

Labor (L)

Another word for work.

The part of the United States government that focuses on work and working Americans is called the Department of Labor (or DOL for short).



M

Master's degree ([M](#))

A kind of degree you can get at some **post-secondary schools**, like a college or university.

Master's degrees usually take 2 years to earn, but you have to have a **bachelor's degree** first.

Most people get a Master's degree because they are interested in going deeper into their field. Others get one because they want a certain job.

Some jobs require a Master's degree, especially if they are professional jobs in fields like science, medicine, or social work. Check the job posting to see what the employer is looking for.



Maximized employment [\(M\)](#)

Reaching your full potential as a person who works.

Some people in your life might try to decide for you what kinds of work you can do, because you have a disability. They might help you get a job doing that kind of work, and then stop helping you learn and grow, even if you know you would be happier and better at doing a different kind of work. But that is not fair.

You have a right to maximized employment. That means that you have a right to do the kind of work you want to do, even if it takes a lot of time and work.

Sometimes that means you need more help. You might need more training or education. You might need more **financial aid**. You might need more **accommodations** or new **assistive technology**. But you have a right to that help.

Example:

Jean is Deaf and speaks ASL. She uses an interpreter when communicating with people who don't speak ASL. When she graduates from school, she gets a job stocking shelves, but she is not satisfied with it.

Jean goes to her local **VR** program and tells them she wants to be a lawyer.

Jean may already have a job, but she is not satisfied with it. If she wants a highly skilled job, she deserves the chance to get one. Jean does not have to settle for an "easy" job, just because she is Deaf.

Together, Jean and her VR counselor work on getting her **accommodations** for her time in law school. When Jean graduates with a law degree, VR makes sure that she has access to an interpreter in the courtroom.



Mentorships [\(M\)](#)

Working with an experienced employee, called a mentor, to learn how they do their job.

Mentorships are like **apprenticeships**, but less formal. Usually, you already have a job, and are working on getting better at your skills by learning from a mentor.

Example:

Eileen has a chronic illness. She just got a job as a social worker. She reaches out to a program made to help disabled social workers connect with more experienced social workers who also have disabilities.

The program connects her with Lashawna, who has been a social worker for 8 years. Lashawna shares her experience as a social worker with a chronic illness. They talk about problems that Eileen might face and ways to deal with them.

Because Eileen had Lashawna as a mentor, she feels more confident about her job. She gets better at problem-solving and **self-advocacy**. She figures out some **accommodations** that might help her in the workplace. Eileen becomes better at her job because of her mentor.

Minimum wage [\(M\)](#)

The smallest amount that a business can pay an **employee** per hour.

Different states have different minimum wages. You can check the minimum wage in your state [here](#).

It is still legal for some **employers**, like **sheltered workshops**, to pay disabled workers less than the minimum wage. This is called “subminimum wage.” Some workers with disabilities only make a few cents per hour, or don’t make any money at all. This is not fair.

If you are getting a job that pays **wages** and not a **salary**, check to make sure that they meet the minimum wage rules for your area.



N

Natural supports (N)

A kind of **accommodation** where people in your community, including your workplace, help support you.

Example:

Trinh has memory problems after a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Sometimes she gets distracted or forgets what she was working on.

Trinh, her **job coach**, her coworkers, and her **HR** team worked together to make sure Trinh had a plan for coping with her TBI symptoms.

Trinh has **assistive technology** that helps her keep track of her tasks, but she still gets confused sometimes, which can be upsetting. When this happens, one of her coworkers helps her calm down first. Then, they work together to help Trinh get back on track.

RAISE

O

Occupation [\(O\)](#)

Another word for a job.

Example:

Daya teaches third graders. Daya's occupation is "teacher."

Occupational license [\(O\)](#)

Some workers, like accountants, architects, and plumbers, need special permission called a license before they can do their job. You get a license after doing special training.

Whether or not you need a license depends on the laws in your state. Check or ask if you need to be licensed to do your job.

On-the-job training [\(O\)](#)

Learning how to do your job, or learning more about how to do your job, by going to work with someone who already knows how.

This is part of **apprenticeships**, most **internships**, and some **mentoring** programs.

Example:

Ethan is an apprentice plumber. As part of his apprenticeship, he goes with a master plumber to jobs and helps them work. Ethan gets paid to work and learn on the job.



P

Plan for Achieving Self-Support (P)

PASS

A kind of support you can get from Social Security, if you are **eligible** for **SSI**.

When you want to get a job, you might need to pay for education, training, tools, transportations, or clothes. PASS can help make sure you can afford these things without losing your SSI **benefits**.

If you want to use PASS, you have to fill out a form. People can help you. You can get help from Social Security, from your **VR** counselor, from a **CIL** or other organization that helps disabled people, or even from family or friends.

You can learn more about PASS at Social Security's [website about PASS](#).

Part time (P)

When you work less than 30 hours a week. If you're not sure, check the job posting, or ask your **employer**.

Usually, part time jobs don't include **benefits**, but this depends on the job and the company. Ask if you aren't sure.

Working part time can be one solution for disabled people who get tired or overwhelmed more easily.

If you haven't worked before or had to take a break, it can also help to start with part time work before a **full time** job, so that you can get used to what it feels like and what you can handle.



Person-Centered Thinking (P) Person-Centered Planning

A way of making a plan for the future where you make all the decisions about your own life, instead of other people deciding for you.

Other people can help you think about the choices, but you get to decide what you want and what is important to you.

Most places that help disabled people find jobs already know how to use person-centered planning. You can ask your service provider how they use person-centered planning to learn how they will make sure your voice is heard.

Personal assistance (P)

A kind of **accommodation** for people who need help doing everyday tasks.

You might have a personal assistant at home to help you get dressed, make food, shower, use the bathroom, or stay safe.

You can also have a personal assistant at work to help you get around, make decisions, communicate with others, or other tasks that you can't do by yourself or with other **assistive technology**.

The federal government is the only **employer** who has to pay for personal assistance. Other employers might not help you pay for it. But you can hire your own personal assistance, or you might be able to get it through disability services like Medicaid or **VR**.

Example:

Helen is a hemiplegic software programmer. She needs help using the bathroom. At work, she has a personal assistant who can help her use the bathroom when she needs it. When her personal assistant isn't helping her, they do other work around the office.



PhD (P)

A kind of degree you can get at some **post-secondary schools**, like a college or university.

A PhD takes a lot of effort and a long time to earn. How long depends on your program, but most take around 8 years. Before you can get a PhD, you need to get a **Master's degree**, and before you get a Master's, you have to get a **bachelor's degree**.

Because it is so hard to get a PhD, only a few jobs require one, like some scientific researchers or college professors. Having a PhD is a sign that you are an expert at what you do.

Post-secondary education (P)

More school after high school. This can include community college, college, university, or **trade school**.

Pre-Employment Transition services (P)

Help that high schools have to give disabled students to get ready for getting a job when they graduate.

They can give you this help in lots of different ways. Some common ways are taking interest quizzes, listening to presentations, or talking with career counselors.



Q

* Quarantine ([Q](#))

If you were close to somebody who tells you that they had **COVID-19**, you need to stay away from other people while you make sure you didn't catch it.

The CDC tells us that if you aren't up to date on your **vaccines**, you should stay away from other people for at least 5 days and make sure you don't get sick. You should also try to get tested for COVID-19. You can talk to your doctor, buy a self-test to use at home, or look for testing sites near your home

The CDC says that if you are up to date on your vaccines, you don't have to stay away from other people. But, if you are around other disabled people or other **high risk** people, you may want to stay away from them just to be safe. You should still get tested for COVID-19, even if you decide not to quarantine.

If you test positive for COVID-19 while in quarantine, you should **self-isolate** by staying away from other people.



R

Reasonable accommodation (R)

A reasonable accommodation is an **accommodation** - a change made so that a disabled person can do something that they couldn't do without that change.

The **ADA** uses the words "reasonable accommodation" to show that not all changes are fair or possible all of the time.

A reasonable accommodation can't cause "undue hardship." That means that if it would be too hard for the company to do it, they don't have to. (But it has to really be too hard - the company can't just say that it's too hard to get out of doing it!)

Usually, there are a lot of different ways to make helpful changes. If one thing causes undue hardship, there are probably other options.

A reasonable accommodation can't change "essential job functions." For example, if you apply for a job as a dog groomer, you have to be able to be around dogs.

And a reasonable accommodation can't make other employees do more work, or change the job they already have.

If you think your request for an accommodation is reasonable, but it gets rejected, you can talk to support systems like [JAN](#), your local **CIL**, or your **VR** counselor for help and more options.

Remote (R)

Another word for **telecommuting**.

A kind of work that you can do from home, or otherwise not in a regular workplace.

Remote work usually requires a computer and a good Internet connection.



Retention (R)

Keeping people with disabilities at a job once they have it.

When **VR** or other programs talk about “job retention,” they mean, “how can we help you to make sure you don’t lose or quit your job?”

Other places, like colleges or businesses, also use the word retention to mean “supporting people so they can stay where they are, instead of having to leave.”

Example:

Jack is autistic. He has a job as a graphics designer at a big company. But doing his work can be stressful, and it is making him feel sick and burned out. Jack is worried that he might not be able to keep going to work.

He talks to his **VR** counselor and to **HR** at his company. Both of them think job retention is important. Both of them want to help him keep his job.

Jack’s VR counselor and HR representative work together to find **accommodations** at work that can help Jack manage his stress. Jack is relieved that he doesn’t have to quit.

* Respiratory illness (R)

A disease that affects the part of your body that helps you breathe. That means it affects your nose, mouth, and lungs. It might make you sneeze or cough. It might make it hard for you to breathe.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness.



Resume (R)

Résumé

A list of your accomplishments and experience that helps **employers** understand who you are and what you can do.

Resumes are usually only a page or two long. They tell employers about your time at school, about your work or **volunteer** experience, and anything else they should know.

Resumes are different from **CVs**, which are longer and list different things, and from **cover letters**, which are a way to introduce yourself and why you want a job.

* Risk (R)

A way to understand how dangerous a situation is.

Knowing about risks is important. When we know about a risk, we can figure out ways to manage it. Then, we won't be in as much danger of getting hurt.

COVID-19 might be a risk in our lives. There are ways we can manage the risk of COVID-19.

Example:

If you touch a hot pan, there is a risk that you might get burned.

You can manage this risk by wearing gloves, waiting for the pan to cool down, and asking for help.

RAISE

S

Salary (S)

A set amount of money you get paid for working in certain kinds of jobs. Usually salaried jobs are **full-time**.

Most people talk about a salary as a certain amount of money per year, but salaried **employees** usually get paid every month.

Salaries are different from **wages**, which depend on how many hours you work.

Example:

Joshua works in an office. His salary is \$48,000. He gets paid a little less than \$4,000 a month, because some of his paycheck is used to pay for things like insurance and taxes.

Self-advocacy (S)

The ability to know your own needs and wants, and speak up to others about them.

Self-advocacy is an important skill at work. For example, you need to be able to tell people when something is wrong or when things are going well.

Some disabled people are self-advocates for a living. They might get paid to speak to crowds about their experiences as a disabled person.



Self-employment (S)

When you work for yourself, instead of for an **employer** who pays you.

Normally, **employees** are hired by employers, who take care of things like taxes, invoices, setting hours, and other organizational work. If you are self-employed, you have to do all of this yourself, which can be complicated.

But, working for yourself means that you might have more freedom and flexibility. You might be able to choose where, when, and for how long you work.

Disabled people who want a lot of flexibility and are okay with doing their own organizational work might want to consider being self-employed.

Freelance work and **contract work** are two kinds of self-employment. Other self-employed people might own their own business.

Shadowing (S)

Following someone at their place of work, so you can learn more about what they do and what their daily life is like.

If you are interested in a kind of work, but not sure yet that it's something you want to do, you can talk to people nearby who do that work, and ask if you can shadow them for a day.

Sometimes, shadowing is part of getting hired for a job. If an **employer** is really interested in you, they might ask you to shadow someone who already does the job you might do. That way, you can make sure it's work you want to do, and they can see how you fit with the other workers.

You might get paid to shadow someone, or you might not. It depends on where and why you are shadowing.



Sheltered workshops [\(S\)](#)

Enclaves, day programs

Workplaces where only disabled people work. Often, these are people with **I/DDs**.

Sheltered workshops have staff who are non-disabled. Usually the staff are more like caregivers or watchers.

In sheltered workshops, workers usually do simple tasks that might be boring, like stuffing envelopes.

It's legal to pay people with disabilities much less than the **minimum wage** if they work in sheltered workshops. This isn't fair. Disabled people deserve to be paid fairly for their work.

The **Employment First** movement and people who support **competitive integrated employment (CIE)** fight against sheltered workshops. They believe that people with disabilities should be able to work in their communities, not shut away in sheltered workshops.

* [Social distancing \(S\)](#)

Staying 6 feet away from other people, so you are less likely to pass on (or get) the **COVID-19** virus.



Soft skills [\(S\)](#)

Skills that aren't part of your job description, but that you still need to do your job.

These are "hidden" skills. They aren't always obvious to disabled people. We might need extra help learning soft skills before we go to work.

Soft skills are different from **hard skills**.

Example:

Jake is a carpenter. But he doesn't just cut wood and hammer nails. Jake also needs to know how to talk to customers to see what they want. He needs to know how to keep his workspace clean. He needs to know how to start and stop projects. These are just some of the soft skills Jake uses at work.

For some people, these skills are easy to learn, but Jake is autistic. He has more trouble learning some of these skills. He might need help from a **job coach** or **VR**.

SSI and SSDI [\(S\)](#)

Benefits that some disabled people get from the government.

Usually, you get SSI or SSDI if you have trouble working. But that doesn't mean you can't work!

Programs like **Ticket to Work** and **VR** can help people who get SSI or SSDI be a part of their community and earn extra money, without losing access to their benefits in case of an emergency.

RAISE

Stress tolerance (S)

The ability to deal with stressful situations.

Some people who struggle with stress tolerance might be able to use accommodations to help them, like a quiet workspace.

But in some workplaces, stress tolerance is an important part of the job. You might need to consider your stress tolerance when choosing a job.

Example:

Anita is an EMT, or emergency medical technician. Anita rides with the ambulance to help people who call 911 for medical emergencies.

Anita has a high stress tolerance. She is good at working under pressure and doesn't mind if a lot of things are happening at once. She's good at talking to people who are in pain and helping them calm down.

Anita's sister, Maria, has a low stress tolerance. She tells Anita that she could never be an EMT! She knows that she would get overwhelmed and upset. Maria chooses a job that doesn't cause her a lot of stress.

Supervisor (S)

The person who is directly in charge of you at work, and gives you directions.



Supported employment [\(S\)](#)

Doing a job with the help of a support person, like a **job coach** or **personal assistant**.

If someone's disability means that they can't work on their own, even with accommodations, **VR** might suggest that they use supported employment. This way, they can still work and be a part of their community.

Example:

Miryam has Down syndrome. She works at a pediatrician's office filing and scanning papers. Once she gets started, she enjoys the routine, but she needs help starting and stopping tasks. She also can't drive, and there isn't much public transportation in her town.

Miryam has a **job coach** who takes her to work in the morning to help her set up her workspace. At lunchtime, her job coach calls her on her iPad and reminds her to take a break to eat. When work is over, Miryam's job coach helps her wind down and drives her home.



I

Telecommuting (T)

Another word for **remote work**.

A kind of work that you can do from home, or otherwise not in a regular workplace.

Telecommuting usually requires a computer and a good Internet connection.

Ticket to Work (T)

A program that helps people who get **SSI** or **SSDI benefits** to go to work.

Ticket to Work connects you with different services to help you get to work, while making sure you have access to your benefits in case you still need them.

[This video](#) can tell you more about the Ticket to Work program. Or, [here's](#) an introduction to the program in ASL.

You can visit the Ticket to Work website [here](#).

Title I (T)

The part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (**ADA**) that says disabled people have rights at their jobs. It says that it's illegal for businesses to **discriminate** against people because of their **disability**.

Title I talks about different kinds of discrimination.

Title I explains what **reasonable accommodations** are, and says that people with disabilities have the right to get them at work.

Title I also says that your job can't ask you if you have a disability. You are allowed to tell them if you want, and this is called **disclosure**.



Trade skills (T)

Some jobs need special, specific training before you can do them. These jobs are often called “trades.” Some examples of trades are welding, electrical work, plumbing, construction, bricklaying, and nursing.

You might learn trade skills at **trade school**, **vocational school**, certain programs, or **apprenticeships**.

Transition (T)

Moving from being a teenager to being a young adult.

When you are a teenager, you usually live with your family. They help care for you and help pay for you. Most teenagers go to high school and get medical care from a pediatrician, a doctor that cares for children.

When you are a young adult, it is time to start becoming more independent. You might want to live on your own, or with other people. You might want to pay for your own bills. You might want to go to school, or you might want to get a job and be involved in your community. You will start getting medical care from adult doctors.

Transition means learning about these changes, and learning how to make decisions on your own (or with help from people you trust).

Learning more about work is an important part of transition.

RAISE

U

Unions (U)

Groups of workers at the same workplace or in the same type of job who help **advocate** for each other.

In unions, workers talk to each other to learn more about what they need and want at work. Then, they can talk to their **employers** to make sure they are getting what they need and want.

If you join a union, you might pay a little money, called dues, to your union leaders every month. If your union needs to support you, they will use money from dues to make sure they can.

There is a law that says any worker in the United States is allowed to join a union. It is illegal to keep workers from making or joining unions. But some businesses do not like unions. They might tell you to report people who want to unionize. You don't have to do that.

It is your choice to join a union. You don't have to if you don't want to. If your job has a union, they will help all workers, even the ones who aren't part of the union.



V

* Vaccination (V)

* Vaccines

A shot that helps your **immune system** fight diseases.

Vaccines work by showing your immune system a very weak version of a disease. Your immune system learns about the germ. If the germ invades your body later, your immune system will recognize it and know how to fight it.

If you are vaccinated against a disease, you won't get the disease, even if the germs invade your body. Or, if you do get the disease, it won't be able to make you very sick.

Vaccines can't make you sick with a disease. You might have side effects that make you feel sick, but they will go away in a few days.

In some rare cases, people can be allergic to vaccines or parts of vaccines. You can talk to your doctor if you are worried about getting sick from a vaccine.

There are vaccines available for lots of diseases, including **COVID-19**.



Vocational rehabilitation (V)

VR

Voc rehab

A service that helps people with disabilities prepare for a job, get a job, keep a job, or **advance** at a job.

VR can help you in lots of different ways. They can help you get **assistive technology** or medical care. They can help you figure out what jobs you would enjoy. They can help you get education or training.

You work with a counselor to figure out what kinds of help you need. Then, you set goals for yourself, and make a plan to achieve your goals.

Every U.S. state and territory has their own VR plan. Some places have two VR programs: one for blind and visually impaired people, and one for all other disabled people.

You can find your local VR program [here](#).

Vocational training (V)

Vocational school

Trade school

A special kind of **post-secondary education** that teaches you **trade skills**.

Volunteering (V)

Doing work without getting paid.

Usually, people volunteer because they want to help other people or their community. You might also volunteer to learn more about work.

You can put volunteer work on your **resume**. People who might hire you like to know that you have done lots of kinds of work, including volunteering.

You can volunteer to do lots of things. Some volunteering can even be **remote**! But you can't volunteer to do work that someone else gets paid to do. For example, you can volunteer at a food bank, but not at a restaurant.

RAISE

W

Wages (W)

If you work in certain kinds of jobs, you get paid a certain amount of money per hour. These are wages.

How much you make depends on how many hours you work.

Waged **employees** usually get paid every few weeks, but it depends on your job. Ask your **employer** about your pay schedule.

Wages are different from **salaries**, which don't change if you work more or fewer hours.

Example:

Kyra works as a barista at a coffee shop. She gets paid \$13 per hour, and usually works 30 hours per week. She makes a little less than \$1,500 per month, because some of her paycheck is used to pay for things like insurance and taxes.

Some weeks, Kyra works closer to 20 hours instead. She will make less money that month.

Work incentives (W)

Special rules for people who get **benefits**, if they go to work.

These rules mean that you don't have to lose your benefits, even if you are working and making money.

The work incentives you get depend on your situation.

The **Ticket to Work** [website](#) has lots of information on work incentives.



Workplace readiness [\(W\)](#)

A group of skills that means you are ready to work.

Some of these are social skills, like knowing how to greet your coworkers, or how to **self-advocate**.

Some of these are practical skills, like knowing how to take public transportation to get to work, or knowing how to pay taxes.