JOB INTERVIEW TRAINING: TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Implementation Guidelines for Youth who are Blind or Have Low Vision

2025

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Introduction

This guide is intended for service providers who work with transition-age youth who are blind or have low vision (B/LV). The purpose of the guide is to provide an overview of *Job Interview Training: Transition-Age Youth with Rita Muniz and Travis Bishop* (JIT-TAY). The guide highlights the program's features, provides strategies for implementation and instruction, and discusses aspects of the program that are specific to users who are B/LV. Additional resources can be found in the Appendices.

JIT-TAY was developed by Dr. Matthew Smith at the University of Michigan, in collaboration with SIMmersion, to help individuals with autism spectrum disorder develop and enhance their interview skills to improve employment outcomes for this population (Smith et al., 2020).[1] As part of a research project conducted by the National Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision (NRTC), JIT-TAY was also adapted to meet the needs of youth who are B/LV (Steverson et al., 2025).

JIT-TAY is an interactive online program that allows users to engage in mock interviews for a company called Wondersmart. The AI-powered hiring managers are equipped with memory and emotion, allowing them to shift their behavior based on interview responses. This creates a dynamic experience that teaches users to respond to social cues and navigate different situations. A job coach also accompanies the users and provides feedback with each response to improve scores and instill confidence.

Program Features

The program includes a variety of learning modules that take participants through the entire job application and interview process. Below are a few main features of JIT-TAY:

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[1]The University of Michigan receives royalties from SIMmersion on the sales of JIT-TAY that are shared with Dr. Matthew Smith and the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

1. <u>Interview Basics</u>: This section has everything students need to know about the entire job search process. From how to find a job opening and create a resume, to disclosing a disability, students can explore many different topics to help them land their dream job!
2. <u>Job Application</u>: This feature allows students to practice filling out a job application for Wondersmart. Each section has tips and advice to teach students the best way to provide the information employers are looking for.
3. <u>Virtual Interviews</u>: With three levels of difficulty, two different interviewers, and job coach feedback, the virtual interview section has training for students of all skill levels. Each interview is dynamic, with student choices impacting how the interview progresses. Students can also practice interviewing for 14 different job types. With each interview, students can enhance their skills and boost their confidence as they learn to show employers they are right for the job!
4. <u>Tracking Progress</u>: Both students and administrators (e.g., teachers, transition specialists) are able to track progress. Administrators can view students' individual transcripts and past interviews and generate reports for an entire group. For example, administrators can see how their students have improved and identify areas that may require more instruction and practice.

Research Findings

The benefits of the program have been rigorously assessed through research. Specifically, compared to typical pre-employment transition services, autistic youth who used JIT-TAY experienced increases in overall likeliness to be hired and job interview skills, including being confident, being professional, and sharing their strengths and skills. JIT-TAY was also effective in reducing job interview anxiety and improving competitive employment (Smith et al., 2021). B/LV youth in the NRTC study also had improvements in job interview skills, including being honest and sharing strengths and skills.

Licensing Information and Account Setup

Group licenses for JIT-TAY are available. For more information about the product and cost, you can contact SIMmersion directly at the email addresses provided below:

Courtney Small (Client Services Specialist): Courtney.small@simmersion.com
SIMmersion's General Contact Information: sal@simmersion.atlassian.net

When registering, make sure you select SIMmersion's *Job Interview Training: Transition-Age Youth with Rita Muniz and Travis Bishop*. You and your students will need individual accounts.

1. <u>Staff/Admin Accounts</u>: Contact SIMmersion to register using the contact information above.
2. <u>Student Accounts</u>: SIMmersion offers a few licensing methods for students: Student Self-Purchase (Discount Codes), Bulk Licenses (Prepaid Licenses), and Enterprising Licensing (Flat-fee Access). Based on your license access type, you

can view the *JIT Youth Guide* for sample emails to help get your students enrolled.

Who Should Use JIT-TAY?

Youth Characteristics

JIT-TAY is designed for youth between 15 and 26 years old; however, the program is particularly beneficial to high school students who are interested in working but currently have little to no work experience. Note that the Interview Basics e-learning material may be too basic for some young adults with prior interview experience.

JIT-TAY is appropriate for students with various disabilities, including blindness, low vision, autism, and learning disabilities.

Youth Prerequisites

Previous job-seeking and interviewing experience is <u>NOT</u> necessary. These skills can be taught in conjunction with the JIT-TAY program.

Skills that are necessary for independent use of JIT-TAY include:

- 4th-grade reading comprehension level or higher (in English)
- Ability to navigate webpages, log in to an account, find information, access links and buttons, and perform basic troubleshooting
- Assistive technology skills for accessing a computer (e.g., using a screen reader or screen magnification software)

Implementation Planning

Become Familiar with the Product

The more you know about JIT-TAY, the better you can implement it with your students. Before introducing the product to the students, spend time going through each section (Interview Basics, Job Application, and Interviews). If possible, try to use the product with the assistive technology that your students will be using (i.e., screen readers/magnifiers). Doing so will allow you to become familiar with how to access different elements of the program, including pop-up boxes, dropdown menus, job coach feedback, and settings.

It may also be helpful to role-play with another staff member (i.e., one acts as the student, and the other acts as the instructor). Not only will you both become more familiar with the product, but you will be able to develop instructional strategies that will be helpful when teaching your students.

Note: Make sure to familiarize yourself with the keyboard commands that screen reader users will need to navigate the program. See the [JAWS cheat sheet](#) and [virtual interview settings](#) for more information.

Determine Staff Roles

Depending on the number of students you are working with, it will be helpful to have at least two staff members available as some students may need extra one-on-one support. All staff should undergo the same level of training with JIT-TAY and become familiar with the product as described previously. However, it may also be helpful to designate different staff members for certain roles. A few example roles are listed below:

- Assistive technology expert: This person should be available to help with glitches, navigation issues, etc.
- License and account manager: The staff member designated to this role could be responsible for contacting SIMmersion Client Services, disseminating discount/license code emails to students, managing subscriptions, etc.
- Instructor/Implementation staff: This person will be responsible for training the students on the product, monitoring their progress, and providing supplemental instruction to improve students' skills in areas where they are experiencing trouble. You may also consider inviting an employment specialist or job coach to discuss real-world applications with your students.

Decide How JIT-TAY Fits Into Your Curriculum

JIT-TAY can be implemented in groups, pairs, or individually. Additionally, JIT-TAY can be implemented in-person or remotely, and students can work on their training while at the school/agency or from home. You can implement JIT-TAY using any of these options or combinations of options to best accommodate your program's structure. However, when deciding how to include JIT-TAY in your curriculum, consider the needs and skills of your students. For example, students with no interviewing experience may require more instruction and training; therefore, it may be best to work with them individually and at the school/agency. It's also important to keep your staff in mind when developing your plan to ensure it is practical, given the level of support that is available.

JIT-TAY can be used as a stand-alone method for training students in the job application and interview processes, or it can be combined with other transition, job readiness, or vocational programs. The JIT-TAY program can provide valuable hands-on practice to supplement discussion-based content and group activities. In fact, previous research indicates that students often benefit more when they use JIT-TAY in conjunction with other pre-employment transition services compared to only receiving pre-employment transition services (Smith et al., 2021).

Design a Schedule

Set specific times aside during the day for students to use the program, such as during class, study hall, or an after-school program. Short, frequent sessions (i.e., about 30–60 minutes per day) are beneficial to keep students engaged. Time spent in each section will vary by student (screen reader users may spend more time than others). Overall time estimates for students who are B/LV to complete each section are provided below:

- Interview Basics: 2–8 hours overall

- Virtual Interviews: Approximately 15–30 minutes per interview (interview times increase with level of difficulty); 3–8 hours overall

Product orientation, discussions, and feedback are not included in these time estimates.

Create a Plan for Providing Support

Some students may work well independently, while others may require more extensive training and support throughout their use of JIT-TAY. Know your students—do you have students with multiple disabilities, or a student who is new to their assistive technology? These are important factors to keep in mind when determining staff roles, creating student groups, and designing your implementation schedule. Make sure to have a plan in place for supporting all of your students' needs before you begin implementing the program. As the students progress through the program, you can always adjust.

Instructional Strategies and Implementation

Orientation Session

Before students start using the product, have an instructional session. Potential topics include:

- Interviewing basics and job application
- What is JIT-TAY, and how does it work?
- How to access and change the settings in the interview interface
- Tips for using JIT-TAY with assistive technology (e.g., JAWS cheat sheet)

Group Implementation

- Have Group Discussions: Work through virtual interviews together, ask students how they would answer questions and why, and talk about the do's and don'ts of interviews.
- Talk About Disability Disclosure: Discuss considerations regarding whether to disclose a disability, when and how to disclose, what questions employers are allowed to ask versus what questions are illegal, and how students can highlight their strengths and skills versus their disabilities.
- Provide Additional Support: Students who are totally blind may need additional instruction on body language and other non-visual cues.
- Encourage Peer Interaction: Allow students to discuss the product with each other, share tips, and support one another.

Remote Implementation

- Provide information, expectations, and schedules to students up front.
- Block off time for students to complete virtual interviews.
- Plan weekly group check-ins with students for discussion and accountability (see discussion topics in the group setting section above).
- Schedule one-on-one meetings with students to review their interview transcripts and address strengths and weaknesses.

Tips for Working with Screen Reader Users

Use verbal prompts to help students problem-solve and develop screen navigation skills. For example:

- Let's figure out what page you're on now.
- Can you read what line you're on?
- Did you go through the links or use the arrow key?
- Let's pull up the list of links and see what's there.

Monitoring Progress and Providing Feedback

- The transcripts are a great source of objective feedback.
  - Schedule meetings with students to go over their transcripts. Discuss their responses (e.g., why it was good or how it could be improved).
  - Encourage students to review their own transcripts to improve their responses with each interview (i.e., play).
- For more information on how students can view their own plays/transcripts, click the links below:
  - Viewing past plays
  - Viewing past transcripts
- Interview scores are also helpful, as they provide feedback on the student's success in five essential components of interviewing: showing interviewers that they are someone people want to work with, confident, professional, interested in the job, and have a positive attitude.

Other Helpful Tips

- Students can select virtual interview responses in different ways, such as using a microphone with speech recognition.
  - If students do not use speech recognition, have them say their responses out loud before selecting them.
- Allow for individual differences in the amount of Interview Basics (e-learning) time based on each student's prior knowledge and experience.
- Make sure students are progressing appropriately.
  - If they are struggling, reduce the level of difficulty of interviews or assign more e-learning time.
  - If they are excelling, encourage them to try more difficult interview levels.
- Remind students regularly to take their time during the interviews, read questions carefully, and consider all response options before selecting one.
- Allow students to use the tokens they earn in the program for real-life tangible rewards (e.g., bonus points, class pizza party, more free time, etc.).

Devices and Accessibility

JIT-TAY works on computers, tablets, and mobile devices (although mobile devices are not recommended for students who are B/LV). Tablets (e.g., iPads) are good options for

students with low vision. Internet access is required to access the product.

- JIT-TAY meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.
- Screen readers (specifically JAWS and NVDA) and screen magnification are supported.
- Audio buttons are built in for students to listen to the e-learning content; however, these options may be hidden for screen reader users.
- Some NRTC study participants preferred using built-in screen magnification and accessibility features (e.g., VoiceOver) on computers and iPads.

For more information regarding accessibility, click the links below:

- SIMmersion accessibility document
- JAWS cheat sheet

The JIT Youth Guide (available upon purchasing a license) also has information about accessibility.

Troubleshooting and Technical Assistance

If the SIMmersion website does not load properly when using Chrome, try using the browser in Incognito mode.

Click the links below for more information regarding technical assistance:

- SIMmersion Troubleshooting Guide
- How to notify SIMmersion of a software issue

If you still have technical issues after reviewing the above documents, contact SIMmersion for technical assistance:

- SIMmersion's General Contact Information: support@simmersion.atlassian.net
- Courtney Small (Client Services Specialist): Courtney.small@simmersion.com

Helpful Resources

SIMmersion offers a variety of tutorials to help users operate different aspects of their products. Tutorial topics include managing accounts, viewing play data, reports and statistics, administrative features, etc. To view the entire list of tutorial options, log in to your administrator account, click your name in the top right corner, and click tutorials.

Still have questions? Click here for an overview of the JIT-TAY program provided by the Level Up Lab at the University of Michigan.

You can also view the Level Up Lab's introductory videos:

- A brief introduction to the program
- Demonstration of JIT-TAY

References

Smith, M. J., Pinto, R. M., Dawalt, L., Smith, J. D., Sherwood, K., Miles, R., Taylor, J., Hume, K., Dawkins, T., Baker-Ericzén, M., Frazier, T., Humm, L., & Steacy, C. (2020). Using community-engaged methods to adapt virtual reality job-interview training for transition-age youth on the autism spectrum. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, *71*, Article e101498. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2019.101498

Smith, M. J., Sherwood, K., Ross, B., Smith, J. D., DaWalt, L., Bishop, L., Humm, L., Elkins, J., & Steacy, C. (2021). Virtual interview training for autistic transition age youth: A randomized controlled feasibility and effectiveness trial. *Autism*, *25*(6), 1536–1552. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361321989928

Steverson, A., Cmar, J. L., Humm, L., & Smith, M. J. (2025). Evaluating the usability of Virtual Interview Training for Transition-Age Youth with visual impairments. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2024.2443803

APPENDICES

Suggested Interview Settings

The following settings are suggestions based on previous B/LV user experiences. Be sure to explore all options with your students to determine the best setting for each individual. Click 'Save' to save interview setting selections.

For screen reader users

Options   X

Display

  Font Size: [Medium ▾]

  ☑ Allow Voiceover

  ☑ Allow Video

      ☐ Fullscreen Video During Playback

      ☐ Use Stay Alive

Feedback

  ☑ Coach

  ☑ Show Last Turn

      ☑ Coach Feedback

  ☐ Do Not Use Color For Feedback

  ☐ Show Meter

Category Options

  Category Mode: [List   ▾]

  ☑ Disable Count Bubbles

Assistance

  ☐ Enable "Read Aloud" mode

  ☐ Use Closed Captioning

  ☐ Disable Colors

  ☐ Disable Clock

  ☐ Show Audio Controls

  A/V Playback: ⦿ Normal | ○ Slower | ○ Slowest

SIMmersion
Immersive Simulations

✓ Save

For screen magnification users

Options   X

Display

    Font Size: [Medium ∨]

    ☑ Allow Voiceover

    ☑ Allow Video

        ☑ Fullscreen Video During Playback

        ☐ Use Stay Alive

Feedback

    ☑ Coach

    ☑ Show Last Turn

        ☑ Coach Feedback

    ☐ Do Not Use Color For Feedback

    ☑ Show Meter

Category Options

    Category Mode: [List ∨]

    ☑ Disable Count Bubbles

Assistance

    ☑ Enable "Read Aloud" mode

    ☐ Use Closed Captioning

    ☐ Disable Colors

    ☐ Disable Clock

    ☐ Show Audio Controls

    A/V Playback: ◉ Normal | ○ Slower | ○ Slowest

SIMmersion
ImmersiVe Simulations

✓ Save

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JAWS Cheat Sheet

General Keystrokes: Here are some basic controls that you can use to navigate SIMmersion's Training Center and available simulations.

Tab - Navigate through the page links that are available on the screen.

Shift - Use in combination with another keystroke to go backward through the page available on-screen. For example, *Shift + Tab* will navigate through links on the page in reverse order, in case you want to go back.

Arrow Keys - Use the arrow keys to move around the page in whatever direction you would like. Effective when cycling through lists.

Enter - Open an available link, button, or element on the screen.

H Key - Identify available *Headings* on the screen.

G Key - Identify available *Graphics* on the screen.

B Key - Identify and cycle through *Buttons* that are available on the screen.

D Key - Cycle through the different *Elements* available on the screen.

P Key - Cycle through *Paragraphs* that are available on the screen. Use *Shift + P* to go back if you want JAWS to read it again.

M Key - Move to the next *Frame* on the screen. Helpful to use if you want to "Skip to Content," which will allow JAWS to bypass the navigation items and read the main content on the page to you.

General Tips: Below are some helpful hints that can improve your navigation of SIMmersion's simulations.
- **Skip to Content** - When JAWS reads "Skip to Content," pressing *Enter* will prompt JAWS to read through the entire page's contents that are present on the screen. You can interrupt this by pressing *CTRL*, pressing *Tab* to navigate to the next link, or pressing *B* to navigate to the next button.
- **CTRL + Insert** - If you want to display a list of elements on the page, use *CTRL + Insert +* a specific keystroke.
  - For example, if you want JAWS to list every available *Button* on the page, use *CTRL + Insert + B* to have JAWS display the list of *Buttons* you can access.
  - You can use the *Up and Down Arrow Keys* to cycle through the list. Press *Enter* to access a *Button* on the list, and JAWS will select the *Button* automatically.
- **Additional Resources** - For more information on JAWS hotkeys, keystrokes, and additional navigation methods, please visit the link below:
  - https://www.freedomscientific.com/training/jaws/hotkeys/