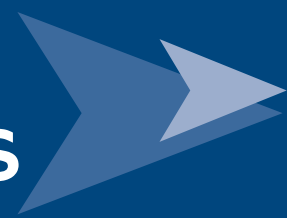


Accommodations for Students with Disabilities



Do you have a diagnosed disability?

Do you have trouble with certain subjects at school?

Do you have difficulty passing tests?

Are you interested in ways to reduce the barriers caused by your disability?

If you have answered yes to the above four questions, you should become familiar with the term *accommodations* and learn how they can be helpful to you. Accommodations involve a wide range of techniques and support systems that help persons with disabilities work around limitations that result from their disability. Read on to learn more about whether you are eligible for—and might benefit from the use of—accommodations.

What is an Accommodation?

The term “accommodation” refers to an adjustment made in either instruction or testing that is appropriate or necessary to enable students like you with documented disabilities to participate fully in your learning. Accommodations are changes in the way you can access learning. With little or no expense, accommodations are an attempt to “level the playing field” and fairly demonstrate learning without compromising the integrity of the testing or lowering program standards. Each accommodation is based on your needs and functional limitations as identified in the diagnostic report that you were given by your testing professional.

Accommodations and the Law

According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, *"no qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives or benefits from federal financial assistance."* This allows persons with disabilities to be included in the mainstream of society.

The term "disability" is defined by law as any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities including: 1) caring for oneself, 2) performing manual tasks, 3) walking, 4) seeing, 5) hearing, 6) speaking, 7) breathing, 8) learning, or 9) working. If a person meets any one of these criteria, he/she is considered "an individual with a disability" under Federal law.

According to the law, a student that is "an individual with a disability" has rights including:

- Receiving accommodations and services
- Receiving an equal opportunity to participate and benefit from educational programs
- Having privacy and confidentiality

As a student with a diagnosed disability, identified and approved accommodations must be provided to you by your school. If they are not provided by your school, you would have the right to pursue further legal action through an established grievance procedure.

What Can Accommodations Do?

The following list shows what can be accomplished by using accommodations.

- Reducing or removing distractions
- Allowing extra time
- Reducing the amount of work
- Changing expected tasks
- Adapting, changing, or using a different learning environment
- Reducing your barriers or maintaining barrier-free environments
- Using cue cards, reminders, and checklists to help with memory
- Having your space and materials organized
- Giving you options for assignments
- Including break times during class
- Providing other assistance to you as appropriate

Types of Accommodations

Accommodations are categorized into four major groupings: 1) by presentation format, 2) response type, 3) setting type, and 4) timing/scheduling as follows:

In Presentation:

- Standard directions can be read and re-read for each new page
- Revised work/answer sheets
- Audiotapes
- Individual tests
- Large print/Braille
- Fewer paragraphs or math problems
- Visual aids (i.e., arrows pointing on a page, highlighted text)

In Response:

- Larger-spaced paper to complete work and write answers
- Dictate answers to teacher
- Using a scribe (person to write your answers)
- Using an interpreter (for a deaf student)
- Responding in alternate format (e.g., large print)
- Using a calculator

In Setting:

- Seating in an area with minimal or no distractions
- Seating at a separate desk or in a different room
- Having small group instruction
- Using improved lighting or acoustics

In Timing/Scheduling:

- Getting extended time to complete tasks
 - Changing the order of tasks
 - Getting flexible scheduling
 - Taking frequent rest breaks
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Selecting Appropriate Accommodations

The process of choosing the best accommodations for you should involve you and your teacher. It should follow certain guidelines as listed below:

- Analyzing tasks that are difficult for you to perform
 - Analyzing the aspect of your disability that is contributing to your difficulty
 - Brainstorming accommodation solutions that could help you
 - Determining specific accommodations based on your needs
 - Implementing one of the solutions
 - Using your new accommodations during class instruction for the first time
 - Using familiar accommodations that you are comfortable with for assessment
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Questions to be Considered

After you have selected accommodations that work for you, those that you use in the classroom should be reviewed to determine whether they are effective. Questions to be asked during this process include:

1. What are your strengths?
2. What is the effect of your disability on your achievement?
3. What accommodations will increase your access to instruction?
4. Are enough options being considered?
5. Are the accommodations that you and your teacher selected meeting your needs?
6. Were too many accommodations introduced to you?
7. What is your opinion of how well the accommodations are working?
8. What difficulties did you encounter in

using the accommodations?

9. What were the results of your classroom assignments when accommodations were not used?

Purpose of Testing Accommodations

In addition to classroom accommodations, assessment/testing accommodations are also especially useful. They make it possible for you to show what you have learned without being limited by your disability. This will give you a fair and equal opportunity to participate and demonstrate your real ability and knowledge.

Testing Accommodations

Most standardized tests like the GED and TABE have policies that allow needed accommodations. Accommodation options for students with diagnosed disabilities include the following:

- Testing in a small group
- Testing in a separate room to reduce distractions
- More time to complete the test
- Having a long test divided into multiple testing sessions
- Having scheduled breaks
- Getting preferential seating arrangements to help you concentrate or feel more comfortable
- Using special furniture (e.g., study carrel, extra table space)
- Scheduling home/hospital testing when not physically able to get to a testing center
- Having simplified directions read aloud and repeated as necessary
- Using visual cues such as highlighters and color post-it notes
- Using a color highlighter on

transparent overlays in the test booklet

- Dictating to a scribe who would mark your answer sheets
 - Using a typewriter or word processor to improve on your handwriting
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Accommodations by Type of Disability

One of the universal guidelines of accommodation use is to plan based on each person's special needs. Below is a list of accommodation options for persons with various different disabilities.

Partial Sighted/Low Vision/Blind

- Braillewriter
- Magnification devices
- Braille edition of assessment
- Audiotape version of assessment
- Large print edition
- Directions read aloud and/or simplified
- Extended time
- Multiple testing sessions
- Scheduled breaks
- Calculator or abacus
- Testing in a separate room or in small group
- Marking an answer booklet at the student's direction
- Providing visual cues (i.e. highlighters)
- Using special paper or scratch paper

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- Extended time
- Multiple testing sessions
- Scheduled breaks
- Classroom adaptations
- Testing in a separate room or small group
- Calculator or abacus
- Typewriter or word processor
- Listening devices

- Qualified interpreter to sign directions
- Student marking in the test booklet
- A scribe marking in an answer booklet at the student's direction
- Providing visual cues (i.e. highlighters, underlining)
- Using special paper
- Simplifying directions

Reading Disability/Dyslexia

- Extended time
- Multiple testing sessions
- Scheduled breaks
- Testing in a separate room or in small group
- Typewriter or word processor
- Audiotaped version
- Limited text used on each page
- Student marking in the test booklet
- A scribe marking in an answer booklet at the student's direction
- Providing visual cues (i.e. highlighters, underlining)
- Using special paper or scratch paper
- Having directions simplified

Writing Disability/Dysgraphia

- Extended time
- Multiple testing sessions
- Scheduled breaks
- Testing in a separate room or in a small group
- Typewriter or word processor in case of handwriting deficits
- Audiotaped version
- Student marking in test booklet
- A scribe marking an answer booklet at the student's direction
- Use of scratch paper to draft response prior to your writing a final answer in answer booklet

Easily Distracted/Short Attention Span (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)

- Extended time
- Multiple testing sessions

- Scheduled breaks
- Testing in a separate room or in a small group
- Audiotaped version
- Student marking in his test booklet
- A scribe marking in an answer booklet at the student's direction
- Dictation within restrictions
- Directions read aloud and simplified
- Providing visual cues (i.e. highlighters, underlining)
- Scratch paper

Communication Disorder

- Extended time
- Multiple testing sessions
- Testing in a separate room or in a small group
- Typewriter or word processor
- A qualified sign language interpreter
- Augmentative communication systems
- An audiotaped version of the test
- Listening devices
- A version of the assessment in sign language
- Directions read aloud and simplified

Accommodations in Specific Academic Areas

Reading

Students can have difficulty with basic reading skills such as hearing the sounds of letters and decoding words. They can also have comprehension difficulties that affect their ability to understand the meaning of words and passages. The following suggested accommodations can be helpful to ensure maximum participation for you in reading:

- Using a frame to focus on the words and block out parts of the text
- Having steps and procedures demonstrated to you
- Using post-it notes or highlighter to

- mark key points in the text
- Using a list of important vocabulary words with definitions
- Using hands-on activities, visual aids, pictures, or diagrams to provide a different way of learning abstract concepts or complicated information
- Using a study guide to follow for independent reading
- Having complicated information divided into chunks or sections
- Using assistive technology devices that translate text to speech such as the Reading Pen, Kurzweil Reader, and a scanner with optical character recognition software
- Using interactive CDs or computer-assisted training with auditory and visual cues rather than written descriptions
- Listening to books-on-tape
- Having text read aloud
- Watching movies or videotapes that present the same information

Mathematics

Students can have math difficulties that range from mild to severe and affect their ability to understand math functions and concepts. They can have poor memory capabilities that result in problems retrieving and mastering basic facts. The following suggested accommodations can be helpful to ensure maximum participation for you in math:

- Using objects and manipulatives to understand math concepts
- Using a calculator or talking calculator for basic math tasks
- Using graph paper to organize problems and keep them within an easy space to work
- Having a sample of math problems written on the board
- Having a smaller number of problems to complete
- Having the steps/procedures for each multi-step problem listed on the board

- Using extra time to complete the math assignments
- Using multiple-choice or short-answer responses

Writing

Students can have writing difficulties that range from poor handwriting to finding the right words, forming sentences, organizing thoughts, and correctly using grammar and spelling. The following suggested accommodations can be helpful to ensure maximum participation for you in writing:

- Using computers, adaptive technology, and word processing programs with word prediction software, grammar and spell checkers, thesaurus, graphic organizer, concept mapping, outlining, and highlighting capabilities
- Using speech recognition products to dictate your assignments by voice command and to surf the Internet
- Using large-print or screen enlargers to increase the size of print to read
- Using adaptive devices such as pencil grips, special pen, pencil holders, erasable pens, or special paper with raised or color-coded line indicators
- Using alternative tests or assignment formats
- Using a scribe when you can't write
- Using computer modifications to access word processing programs
- Having extended time for class work, homework, and exams
- Using notetakers

Listening

Students can have listening difficulties that range from maintaining attention, distractibility, and following ideas, to interpreting information presented orally. The following suggested accommodations can be helpful to ensure maximum participation in your listening:

- Having the length and descriptiveness of reading material

shortened

- Having material repeated that is presented out loud
- Using visual models
- Having important ideas written on the board or on overhead transparencies
- Using color-coded highlighting
- Having information broken down into steps
- Using visual response cards
- Using dry-erase boards
- Using discussion, small group interaction, and problem-solving activities
- Tape recording class lectures and discussions
- Using models to show details
- Having the whole class respond
- Following cues to shift to new ideas and topics
- Having other capable students be notetakers

Following Directions

Students can have difficulties following directions if their disabilities result in trouble paying attention or remembering. The following suggested accommodations can be helpful to ensure your improved ability to follow directions:

- Getting directions in writing, repeated and/or simplified
- Requesting that oral directions be combined with diagrams, pictures, or words.
- Using step-by-step instructions either written or in picture sequences
- Using a list to check off steps as they are completed
- Concentrating on one portion of an assignment at a time
- Requesting visual displays such as flowcharts, pre-reading questions, and keyword note-taking organizers
- Using a buddy system to clarify directions

Accommodations that are Usually Not Allowed During Testing

In summary, accommodations are meant to reduce or even eliminate the effects of your disability; they do not reduce learning expectations. They allow students with disabilities like you to have equal access to learning. Although accommodations are allowed during classroom instruction, using them during standardized testing is not automatic.

To receive accommodations on standardized testing such as the GED Tests, written documentation resulting from your diagnostic testing/assessment is required. Your documentation should clearly identify the disability for which you need the accommodation(s). There should be a clear statement of the functional limitations caused by the disability. It should explain how they affect your ability to perform tasks during testing. There must be a link between your disability, your limitations, and the tasks you have to complete.

As a rule, the following accommodations are not allowable during standardized testing. To be sure about a specific test's accommodation guidelines, ask your teacher for more information.

The following accommodations are not allowed on most standardized testing:

- Clarifying test questions
- Using spell check or word processor
- Discussing a particular question during the test
- Someone reading any portion of a reading test, except the directions
- Getting an unsupervised break in the middle of a section
- Using a dictionary





You have now learned a great deal about accommodations. If you are a student with a diagnosed disability, remember that you have the legal right to request and utilize accommodations where appropriate during classroom instruction and on tests. You are encouraged to let your classroom teacher and guidance counselor know as soon as possible that you want to speak with them about requesting accommodations.

You will be glad that you did.