

School Accommodations and Modifications

Some students with disabilities need accommodations or modifications to their educational program in order to participate in the general curriculum and to be successful in school. While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its regulations do not define accommodations or modifications, there is some agreement as to what they mean. An accommodation as used in this document allows a student to complete the same assignment or test as other students, but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response and/or presentation. This accommodation does not alter in any significant way what the test or assignment measures. Examples of accommodations include a student who is blind taking a Braille version of a test or a student taking a test alone in a quiet room.

A modification as used in this document is an adjustment to an assignment or a test that changes the standard or what the test or assignment is supposed to measure. Examples of possible modifications include a student completing work on part of a standard or a student completing an alternate assignment that is more easily achievable than the standard assignment.

Needed modifications and accommodations should be written into a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. These changes should be chosen to fit the student's individual needs. It's important to include the student, if appropriate, when discussing needed accommodations and modifications. Asking the student what would be helpful is a good first step.

Here are some ideas for changes in textbooks and curriculum, the classroom environment, instruction and assignments, and possible behavior expectations that may be helpful when educating students with disabilities. When reviewing these ideas, keep in mind that any accommodations or modifications an IEP team chooses must be based on the individual needs of students, and the changes must be provided if included in the child's IEP.

Textbooks and Curriculum

Books

- Provide alternative books with similar concepts, but at an easier reading level.
- Provide audiotapes of textbooks and have the student follow the text while listening.
- Provide summaries of chapters.
- Provide interesting reading material at or slightly above the student's comfortable reading level.
- Use peer readers.
- Use marker to highlight important textbook sections.
- Use word-for-word sentence fill-ins.
- Provide two sets of textbooks, one for home and one for school.
- Use index cards to record major themes.
- Provide the student with a list of discussion questions before reading the material.
- Give page numbers to help the student find answers.
- Provide books and other written materials in alternative formats such as Braille or large print.

Curriculum

- Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts.
- Shorten spelling tests to focus on mastering the most functional words.
- Substitute alternatives for written assignments (clay models, posters, panoramas, collections, etc.).
- Specify and list exactly what the student will need to learn to pass. Review this frequently.

- Modify expectations based on student needs (e.g., “When you have read this chapter, you should be able to list three reasons for the Civil War.”).
- Give alternatives to long written reports (e.g., write several short reports, preview new audiovisual materials and write a short review, give an oral report on an assigned topic).

Classroom Environment

- Develop individualized rules for the student.
- Evaluate the classroom structure against the student’s needs (flexible structure, firm limits, etc.).
- Keep workspace clear of unrelated materials.
- Keep the classroom quiet during intense learning times.
- Reduce visual distractions in the classroom (mobiles, etc.).
- Provide a computer for written work.
- Seat the student close to the teacher or a positive role model.
- Use a study carrel. (Provide extras so that the student is not singled out.)
- Seat the student away from windows or doorways.
- Provide an unobstructed view of the chalkboard, teacher, movie screen, etc.
- Keep extra supplies of classroom materials (pencils, books) on hand.
- Use alternatives to crossword puzzles or word finds.
- Maintain adequate space between desks.

Instruction and Assignments

Directions

- Use both oral and printed directions.
- Give directions in small steps and in as few words as possible.
- Number and sequence the steps in a task.
- Have student repeat the directions for a task.
- Provide visual aids.
- Show a model of the end product of directions (e.g., a completed math problem or finished quiz).
- Stand near the student when giving directions or presenting a lesson.

Time/transitions

- Alert student several minutes before a transition from one activity to another is planned; give several reminders.
- Provide additional time to complete a task.
- Allow extra time to turn in homework without penalty.
- Provide assistance when moving about the building.

Handwriting

- Use worksheets that require minimal writing.
- Use fill-in questions with space for a brief response rather than a short essay.
- Provide a “designated notetaker” or photocopy of other student or teacher notes. (Do not require a poor notetaker or a student with no friends to arrange with another student for notes.)
- Provide a print outline with videotapes and filmstrips.
- Provide a print copy of any assignments or directions written on the blackboard.
- Omit assignments that require copying, or let the student use a tape recorder to dictate answers.

Grading

- Provide a partial grade based on individual progress or effort.
- Use daily or frequent grading averaged into a grade for the quarter.
- Weight daily work higher than tests for a student who performs poorly on tests.
- Mark the correct answers rather than the incorrect ones.
- Permit a student to rework missed problems for a better grade.
- Average grades out when assignments are reworked, or grade on corrected work.
- Use a pass-fail or an alternative grading system when the student is assessed on his or her own growth.

Tests

- Go over directions orally.
- Teach the student how to take tests (e.g., how to review, to plan time for each section).
- Provide a vocabulary list with definitions.
- Permit as much time as needed to finish tests.
- Allow tests to be taken in a room with few distractions (e.g., the library).
- Have test materials read to the student, and allow oral responses.
- Divide tests into small sections of similar questions or problems.
- Use recognition tests (true-false, multiple choice, or matching) instead of essays.
- Allow the student to complete an independent project as an alternative test.
- Give progress reports instead of grades.
- Grade spelling separately from content.
- Provide typed test materials, not tests written in cursive.
- Allow take-home or open-book tests.
- Provide possible answers for fill-in-the blank sections.
- Provide the first letter of the missing word.

Math

- Allow the student to use a calculator without penalty.
- Group similar problems together (e.g., all addition in one section).
- Provide fewer problems on a worksheet (e.g., 4 to 6 problems on a page, rather than 20 or 30).
- Require fewer problems to attain passing grades.
- Use enlarged graph paper to write problems to help the student keep numbers in columns.
- Provide a table of math facts for reference.
- Tape a number line to the student's desk.
- Read and explain story problems, or break problems into smaller steps.
- Use pictures or graphics.

Other

- Use Post-it notes to mark assignments in textbooks.
- Check progress and provide feedback often in the first few minutes of each assignment.
- Place a ruler under sentences being read for better tracking.
- Introduce an overview of long-term assignments so the student knows what is expected and when it is due.
- Break long-term assignments into small, sequential steps, with daily monitoring and frequent grading.
- Have the student practice presenting in a small group before presenting to the class.
- Hand out worksheets one at a time.
- Sequence work, with the easiest part first.
- Use blackline copies, not dittos.
- Provide study guides and study questions that directly relate to tests.
- Reinforce student for recording assignments and due dates in a notebook.
- Draw arrows on worksheets, chalkboard, or overheads to show how ideas are related, or use other graphic organizers such as flow charts.

Behavior

- Arrange a "check-in" time to organize the day.
- Pair the student with a student who is a good behavior model for class projects.
- Modify school rules that may discriminate against the student.
- Use nonverbal cues to remind the student of rule violations.
- Amend consequences for rule violations (e.g., reward a forgetful student for remembering to bring pencils to class, rather than punishing the failure to remember).
- Minimize the use of punishment; provide positive as well as negative consequences.
- Develop an individualized behavior intervention plan that is positive and consistent with the student's ability and skills.
- Increase the frequency and immediacy of reinforcement.

-
- Arrange for the student to leave the classroom voluntarily and go to a designated “safe place” when under high stress.
 - Develop a system or a code word to let the student know when behavior is not appropriate.
 - Ignore behaviors that are not seriously disruptive.
 - Develop interventions for behaviors that are annoying but not deliberate (e.g., provide a small piece of foam rubber for the desk of a student who continually taps a pencil on the desktop).
 - Be aware of behavior changes that relate to medication or the length of the school day; modify expectations if appropriate.