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More about Accommodations

To decide which accommodations are needed, you should first think about the learning problems your child is likely to experience in the classroom. Teachers may need to make changes in the way they teach, in the materials that your child uses, or in the classroom environment. Your child may need to get additional help from the teacher's aide or assistant. He or she may also need to use assistive technology. Assistive technology encompasses a wide range of tools and techniques. Some low-tech tools include things like pencil grips, study guides, or highlighted materials. High-tech tools include electronic equipment such as a talking calculator or specially designed word processing software. School districts use an evaluation process to identify what kinds of assistive technology are needed for a student. This chapter provides examples of accommodations for a variety of learning problems, including examples of assistive technology.



Instructional Methods and Materials

Many students with a disability experience problems in the classroom because they have difficulty following the instructional methods and using the textbooks and other types of learning materials. Accommodations can help students work around these problems.

Accommodations for Reading

The ability to read is one of the keys to academic success. Many students with a disability do not have sufficient skills to read on grade level. They may still be learning basic phonics and word-identification skills. They may be learning how to use strategies to help them understand written words, phrases, and sentences. Some textbooks and worksheets present additional challenges to students because they are not clear or well organized.

Learning Problem

Students have difficulty finding the main ideas or knowing what is important to remember in the book they are reading.



Students can understand information when they listen to it, but cannot read materials required for class assignments.

Students who are blind or visually impaired may require specially prepared materials or equipment to obtain information for class.

Accommodation

- ✓ Highlight important ideas and tell students to read them first.
- ✓ Give students a study guide to follow when they must read by themselves.
- ✓ Let students use a book that is written on a lower grade level. This may help students pay more attention to the main ideas.
- ✓ Provide a tape-recorded version of the material.
- ✓ Use a videotape or movie that presents the same information.
- ✓ Use assistive technology to transfer printed words to speech.
- ✓ Have a learning buddy read aloud textbooks or other printed material.
- ✓ Provide books-on-tape or large-print versions of texts.
- ✓ Provide books and other instructional materials in braille or embossed format.
- ✓ Provide special equipment such as an optical enhancer or magnifier.

Accommodations for Lectures and Discussions

Some students with a disability have difficulty maintaining attention, following ideas, and interpreting information that is presented orally. They may need accommodations for instruction that involves lectures and discussions.

Learning Problem

Students have difficulty figuring out what they are supposed to learn from a lecture or discussion.

Accommodation

- ✓ Use visual aids, such as chalkboard, overhead, or charts.
- ✓ Provide an overview of the content at the beginning of the lesson. Introduce new vocabulary before the lesson.
- ✓ Give students a summary of important information from the lecture with a list of questions to be answered.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students have trouble following the ideas during the lecture or discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Keep students involved by encouraging them to ask questions or by breaking up the lecture with small group activities or discussion.
Students have difficulty taking notes and remembering the ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify the main steps or key components of the information.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Write important ideas on the board. Use colored chalk or markers for emphasis.
Students have difficulty taking notes and remembering the ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Give students copies of lecture notes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Let students use a tape recorder to record lectures and class discussions.
Students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may need assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Repeat, use other words, and summarize all important points. This is particularly important at the end of the lecture or discussion.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide help for notetaking, such as giving students a copy of overheads, an outline of the lecture, or a diagram.
Students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may need assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use pictures, written words, charts, or diagrams to reinforce what is presented orally. Repeat as often as necessary.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide a sign language interpreter or notetaker.
Accommodations for Mathematics	
	<p>Students with a disability may have problems learning mathematical concepts and processes. Some have poor arithmetic skills and continue to rely on childish techniques, like counting on their fingers. Some students have a great deal of difficulty remembering basic facts.</p>
Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students have difficulty understanding math concepts and solving problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Let students use concrete materials and objects to learn about mathematical concepts.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Color-code or highlight key words in math word problems.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Let students use a chart to plan ways to solve math problems.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Let students use a calculator or chart of basic facts for computation.

Assignments and Assessments

Frequently, students with a disability need accommodations for specific kinds of classroom assignments and assessment. Generally, students need the same kind of accommodation for *both* assignments and assessments. If the student needs to use a word processor to complete a written assignment, he or she will also need it for a written test.

Accommodations for Writing

Problems with written assignments and assessments may be related to difficulties with handwriting. They may also be the result of expressive language disabilities such as difficulties with finding words, forming sentences, organizing thoughts, and using standard forms of grammar and spelling.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students have trouble with fine motor control and handwriting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let students write directly in the workbook or on a copy of the workbook page.✓ Let students use a word processor or typewriter.✓ Let students dictate their work to a teaching assistant or classmate who will write it down.✓ Let students use adaptive devices: pencil grips or special pen or pencil holders, erasable pens, or special paper with raised or color-coded lines.
Students have difficulty expressing their ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let students use a thesaurus to find words to write or say.✓ Let students use special word processing software that anticipates what students are trying to write.✓ Let students use a spelling dictionary or electronic spelling aid.✓ Grade content and mechanics separately in written assignments. Give students a chance to correct spelling and grammar errors.



Accommodations for Following Instructions

Teachers generally give directions by telling, writing, or showing students what they are supposed to do. Students with a disability may have difficulty following directions because they have trouble paying attention or remembering. They may also have trouble understanding what the directions are asking them to do.

Learning Problem

Students have trouble remembering what to do.

Accommodation

- ✓ Have students say the directions in their own words or show the teacher what they are to do.
- ✓ Teach students how to use an assignment notebook or personal planner to keep track of their assignments and tests.
- ✓ Give step-by-step instructions. Outline the steps in writing or use pictures.
- ✓ Complete sample problems or tasks to show students what they are to do.
- ✓ Combine spoken directions with pictures, words, or diagrams.

Students have trouble understanding the directions.

Accommodations for Completing Assignments

Some students with a disability have trouble completing assignments. This may be because they work very slowly and run out of time. Some students may not remember to get the resources and materials they will need to complete all of their assignments.

Learning Problem

Students have trouble keeping track of their assignments.

Accommodation

- ✓ Break long assignments into parts. Set a separate due date for each part.
- ✓ Have students mark assignments on a calendar.
- ✓ Reduce the total amount of work. Be sure to select the tasks or items that are needed to accomplish all of the learning objectives.
- ✓ Let students use resources and instructional materials outside of class.
- ✓ Give partial credit for late assignments or incomplete work until students are able to complete their work on time.

Students work slower than classmates.



Accommodations for Organization

Students who have trouble attending to more than one thing at a time often have problems with complex assignments. Students who are easily distracted may forget the instructions or get things confused. Some instructional materials are not clear. Materials with too many details can be very confusing to students.

Keeping track of classroom materials also presents problems to many students. They don't know how to store materials so they can easily find them. Lockers or desks are often cluttered with things that are not really needed at school.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students are confused by complex instructions and materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use color-coding to help students identify different kinds of tasks or materials.✓ Use uncluttered tests and worksheets. Arrange problems or work so that it is easy to know where to start and how to proceed.
Students have difficulty keeping their materials and belongings organized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let students use a special folder or binder to keep materials organized. Use dividers or folders to keep subjects organized and use a different color for each unit or subject.✓ Give students a checklist of materials needed for each class. The checklist can be kept in their locker or binder.



Accommodations for Taking Tests

In general, students with a disability will need the same types of accommodations for both classroom tests and standardized tests, if they are allowed. Accommodations that are used with standardized tests such as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) must be consistent with what is stated in the test manual or with what has been approved by the State Board of Education. Accommodations provide the opportunity for students with a disability to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills without being unfairly tested.

The five major categories of accommodations allowed for the FCAT and standardized test are presentation, responding, scheduling, setting, and assistive technology. Here are some examples for each category.

Presentation

Most assessments are presented in the form of paper and pencil tasks. The questions or problems are presented in writing or with graphics. The reading level and complexity of the content reflects what has been taught. Other types of assessments involve the observation of students performing a particular task or skill.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students can't read well enough or need a different form of the test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Read the test items aloud to students, unless it is a test of reading skills.✓ Use text-to-speech technology to communicate directions or test items for items other than reading tests.✓ Let the student read the test items to him- or herself while working on the assessment.✓ Provide copies of tests in braille or in large print formats.✓ Let the student use assistive technology for magnification or amplification.
Students need assistance in focusing on the test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student use a pointer, template, blank card, or positioning tool to enhance visual attention on the test materials.✓ Use blank colored transparencies or overlays to enhance visual perception.✓ Provide white noise (sound machines) and headphones to reduce auditory distractions.✓ Use symbols on the test or answer form that help the student follow directions, such as an arrow or stop sign.
Students need help with directions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Provide a sign language interpreter for oral directions.✓ Read the test directions and writing prompt aloud.✓ Reread or explain the directions of the test if the student needs it.✓ Underline or highlight important words in the directions or test items.

Learning Problem

Students are unsure about what to do.

Accommodation

- ✓ Give verbal encouragement ("keep working, answer every question") without giving clues to correct or incorrect answers.
- ✓ Give extra examples for practice to make sure the student knows what to do.

Some accommodations for presentation format are not permitted on the FCAT because they change what is being tested. For example, test items can not be read aloud to the student if the purpose of the test is to measure reading skills. *The following accommodations may be used for classroom assessments, but are not allowed on the FCAT.*

Students have difficulty shifting from one type of task to another.

- ✓ Group questions so that similar kinds of items are together. Put the easiest questions first.

Students need assistance in recalling information.

- ✓ Block matching questions into small groups of four or five items.
- ✓ Provide a list of words to use for fill-in-the-blank or essay questions.
- ✓ Let the student take an open book test, unless memorization is required.
- ✓ Eliminate one of the choices in multiple-choice items.
- ✓ Require fewer questions, but select ones that measure all required content.

Response

Students respond to test questions in different way including writing an answer, selecting one of the responses to multiple-choice questions, or solving a problem and explaining the solution. Answer sheets may require students to bubble in the correct circle for each question.

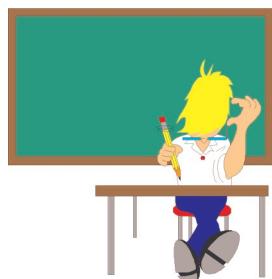
Accommodations allowed on the FCAT may include:

Learning Problem

Students have difficulty answering the test questions with their own handwriting.

Accommodation

- ✓ Let the student use increased space for answering test questions.
- ✓ Let the student respond orally, dictate answers to an aide or test proctor, or tape record answers.
- ✓ Let the student sign responses to an interpreter.

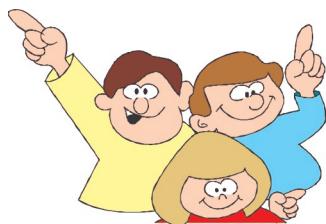


Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students have difficulty using handwriting to answer the questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student use a typewriter or word processor to write answers to test items. Remember that students can't use the spell check or grammar check when they are taking the FCAT.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student write on the test booklet instead of writing on an answer sheet.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student braille responses on a separate paper.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student use speech-to-text technology to record responses.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student use diagrams or charts and outlines to plan for open-ended or essay questions.
Students have difficulty maintaining effort and attention on tests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Monitor the student's answer sheet to determine if the student is recording their responses in the correct space.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Give partial credit for answers to extended response questions that are partially correct. The FCAT rubrics for extended response questions give some credit for partially correct answers.
Some accommodations for responding are not permitted on the FCAT because they change what is being tested. <i>The following accommodations may be used for classroom assessments, but are not allowed on the FCAT.</i>	
Students have difficulty performing on tests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Provide pre-designed webs, diagrams or charts and outlines for students to use to plan for open-ended or essay questions.✓ Let the student provide alternate demonstrations of knowledge and skills using demonstrations, role playing, or interviewing.✓ Let the student use references such as a dictionary, thesaurus, or almanac.✓ Let the student use manipulatives to check or complete computations.✓ Let the student retake the test and give credit for improvement. Remember, the FCAT only allows retakes for the grade 10 tests.

Schedule

Some students may need to have extra time to complete the test. Students who use certain kinds of assistive technology or who work very slowly may need to have the schedule changed for the test.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students work very slowly or can't work for long periods of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let students have additional time to complete tests.✓ Break tests into small sections and let students take them over a period of days, if needed.✓ Let the student take short breaks during the test period.✓ Let the student take the test at a certain time of day. Some students take medications or have physical conditions that may affect their attention and alertness.



Some accommodations for schedules are not permitted on the FCAT because they change what is being tested. *The following accommodations may be used for classroom assessments, but are not allowed on the FCAT.*

- ✓ Require fewer questions. Be sure that all required content and skills are tested.
- ✓ Let the student go back over questions answered on a previous day and make corrections.

Setting

Some students may need a special setting to take the test. Students who are easily distracted may do better when taking the test alone or in a small group. Other students need special accommodations because of their sensory or physical impairments.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students can't take tests in a large group because they are easily distracted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Give the test to the student alone or in a small group.✓ Let the student use a study enclosure to take the test.
Students have special needs based on sensory or physical impairments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student take the test in another room where there are no distractions.✓ Let the student use needed adaptive furniture or equipment.

Assistive Technology

Students who use assistive technology should be able to use it when they are taking tests. It's important to consider whether or not the use of the technology would change what is actually being assessed. For example technology that translates written words to spoken words (text to speech) could not be used by a student on a test of reading skills. Other assistive technology typically used by the student in classroom instruction can be used for assessments provided the purpose of the testing is not violated. It is also important to make sure that the answers on the test reflect the independent work of the student.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students use assistive technology to acquire information or to express what they have learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let the student use an adaptive calculator to solve math problems. Remember that the FCAT only allows calculators in grades 7-10.✓ Let the student use technology for writing essays or long answers or explanations to test questions. For example a word processor, digital voice recorder, or cassette tape recorder could be used by students to record their answers.

Unique Accommodations

Some students may need unusual accommodations for the FCAT that are not already identified by the Department of Education. Unique accommodations usually involve changes to existing test materials. A student may use a unique accommodation with the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education. The exceptional student education program in your school district can help with the request for approval. Some examples of unique accommodations include:

- ✓ increased space between test items
- ✓ fewer items on a page
- ✓ tabbed or modified pages for easy turning
- ✓ papers secured to the work area.

Learning Environment

Accommodations may also involve changes to the environment of the school or classroom. Changes to the learning environment may include adaptations to the physical setting of the school or classroom. They may also change the way students are grouped for instruction. Some students may need special techniques to help them control their own behavior. In some cases, an off-campus location may be needed. When an off-campus site is selected, it is important that students have activities with people who do not have disabilities.

Accommodations to the Physical Environment

An accessible or barrier-free environment is necessary to make sure that students with a disability can get around in the school or classroom. Many buildings are already equipped with nonslip surfaces, guide rails, ramps, elevators, and automatic doors for students who have difficulty with mobility. Accessibility standards are included in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The accessibility standards describe requirements for components such as parking, entries into buildings and rooms, alarms, telephones, drinking fountains, and restrooms.



If your child needs these types of accommodations and they are not readily available in your school, you may need to speak up. Talk about your child's needs with teachers and staff. Have a meeting with the school administrator to see what can be done. You may also contact district staff for information and assistance.

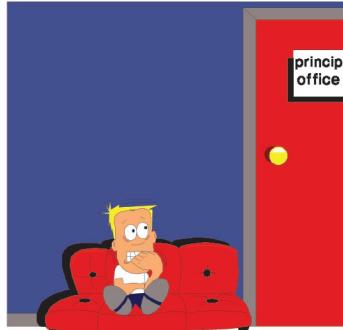
Accommodations for Behavior Management

Changes to the learning environment may be needed to help some students manage their own behavior. Learning the rules of conduct and how to follow them is sometimes as hard as learning how to solve a complex problem in science or mathematics. Special behavioral plans or counseling services might be needed for some students with a disability.

Learning Problem	Accommodation
Students can't control their own behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Let students use a study enclosure to complete independent work.✓ Give students work that can be completed in short periods of time.✓ Let students use a timer to monitor how much longer they have to work.

Learning Problem

Students need some structure to help control their own behavior.

**Accommodation**

- ✓ Reinforce positive behaviors for following class rules.
- ✓ Make a list of consequences for breaking rules. Make sure that students know what the rules and consequences are.
- ✓ Provide activities for students during free time.
- ✓ Use prompts and follow routines to get ready to start a lesson, to change classes or go to lunch, or to travel to another area in the school.
- ✓ Let students sit next to an aide, volunteer, or trained classmate who can help them pay attention.
- ✓ Identify a study buddy who can help students when the teacher is busy. Make sure the buddy knows how to work effectively with the students.
- ✓ Provide instruction individually or in small groups.

Students cannot control their own behavior without personal attention and support from school personnel.

Time Demands and Scheduling

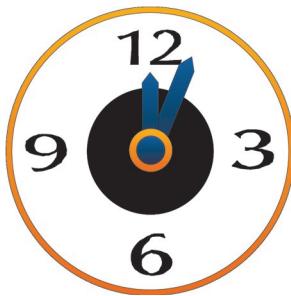
Your child may work or learn at a slower pace than his or her classmates. Some students do better when they are not under the pressure of a strict schedule. Accommodations can be made to time demands or requirements for assignments and assessments, as well as for whole programs of study.

In some cases the amount of required practice can be reduced. If the assignment has many similar items, a student may be asked to do every other one. In high school, the students may be allowed to receive an "incomplete" as a grade for a course. Then they can complete the course the following semester or during summer school.

Assigning students to appropriate classes is especially important in middle and high school programs. ESE teachers may need to work with school administrators to be sure the class schedules can accommodate any special needs of students with a disability.

Here are some additional techniques related to adjusting time demands and schedules.

- ✓ Use flexible scheduling that allows students more time to complete a course. Sometimes summer school can be used for this purpose.
- ✓ Allow additional time for classwork and tests.
- ✓ Give assignments ahead of time, so students can get started early.
- ✓ Give students a clear schedule with checkpoints along the way.



Special Communication Systems

Some students with a disability use specialized communication systems. These systems may involve different methods of communication. One system used by many students who are deaf or hard of hearing is total communication. This involves sign language, finger spelling, and lip reading. Other students may need to use augmentative communication systems such as a communication board or a presented symbol system.

If your child requires a specialized communication system, it will be important for you and the teachers to learn about it. You and the teachers may need to get training so you can easily communicate with your child.