

College Visit Checklist for Students With Disabilities

Physical Disabilities



Congratulations

on taking the first steps to furthering your education and creating a brighter future for yourself. Finding the right fit for your higher education experience is a long journey; it can feel more challenging with a disability, but we're here to help. This guide is a tool to help you assess whether a college or university will be a good fit for your needs.

The guide is organized into sections based on your education route:



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Four-Year Colleges and Universities

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Classrooms

- Schedule a tour of the facilities, including several buildings where you may have classes or lectures.
- Ask the admissions office about virtual tours, if those will work better for you.
- Use a map of campus—physical or virtual—to make notes as you orient yourself to the ground.
- Locate the library, tutoring center and career services center. These are all excellent and usually free tools that you may find helpful.
- Check the entrances to buildings for the physical accessibility specific to your needs.
- Ask about how cold or hot it tends to get in the classrooms so you can plan or prepare accommodation paperwork, if necessary.
- Determine if the college allows food (outside the cafeteria) to come into buildings and/or classrooms.
- In classrooms, check for physically accessible desks and inquire about securing one if one is not already in the classroom.
- Be sure that a whiteboard or projector screen is readable from the location of your physically accessible desk.
- Examine the size of the room closely and ensure that you can hear the professor if you're located in different parts of the classroom.
- Locate the exit points in the classroom in case you need to leave quickly.
- Evaluate the light source to determine if it may cause migraines or headaches.
- Ask staff about audio-visual tools in the classrooms that would support your access to the material.
- Ask about functional support you might need in a classroom, like note-taking help or an ASL interpreter to meet impaired hearing needs.

Notes:



Classroom Accommodations and Accommodations Process

Once you identify what office you'll need to go through to receive accommodations, ask these questions.

- What accommodations are available for communication challenges and what are the expectations for assistive devices or tools (such as speech-to-text, AAC, etc.)?
- Can accommodations be provided in a course with a discussion section or required verbal participation?
- Can Student Services accommodate a decreased workload request if you need more time and can't handle a full workload?

★ NOTE: This may impact your financial aid eligibility.

- How long does the intake process for accommodations usually take?
 - When should you start the process?
- What documentation will be required for the college to determine reasonable accommodations?
- How long does the determination process take?
- When should you expect to receive an accommodation letter?
- If a professor refuses to acknowledge the accommodations or implement them in their classroom, what is the dispute resolution process?
- How do you notify the office of concerns regarding your accommodations?
- What do you do if your accommodations need to change?
- How does a student file a complaint if an approved accommodation is refused?
- What type of training do college staff receive with regard to their responsibilities under ADA and 504?
- Do you need documentation to use assistive technology in the classroom?

Service Animals

- If you require the use of a service animal, be sure to determine the process for bringing a service animal onto campus and where they are allowed.

★ NOTE: Service animals are allowed under ADA/504 with a documented disability. Colleges and universities cannot prevent you from bringing your service animal. An Emotional Support animal, however, may not meet the same requirements.

Notes:



Dining Facilities

Depending on your medical needs, it may be essential to seek accommodations for dining. Be sure to tour the dining facilities and ask questions.

- Is there “low-glycemic index food” or “sugar-free food” available regularly?
- Is there “gluten-free food” available regularly?
- What documentation is needed to show your dietary requirements?

★ NOTE: Determine if the documentation is required from an allergist or a primary care physician.

- If the school requires a dining plan, can the dining plan expense be reduced or eliminated if dietary restrictions cannot be accommodated?
- Ask about the availability of physically accessible seating in dining areas.

Campus Culture

- Speak to a student and a professor about the school/college/university.
- Speak to an admissions officer about application process accommodations if needed.
- Discuss the self-disclosure process of a disability at the college/school/university.
- Find out which office to go through to request accommodations, such as the student services office or Dean of Students office.
- Recommend that the accommodations office be added to the tour.
- Talk to the Dean of Students to understand the culture at your prospective college/school/university.
 - Disclose as much or as little information about yourself as you see fit.
- Possible questions to ask:
 - Are there disability-specific student organizations or peer support services on campus?

Notes:



Learning Spaces

- Schedule a tour of the facilities, including several buildings where you may have classes, labs and lectures.
- Ask for a map of the campus so you can mark notes as you tour to help orient yourself on the grounds.
- Locate the library, tutoring center and career services center. These are all excellent and usually free tools that you may need.
- Check the entrances to buildings for physical accessibility. For example:
 - Is there a ramp, elevator or chair lift to assist you in getting inside the building?
 - Are the doorframes large enough to fit a walker or wheelchair through?
- Ask about how cold or hot it tends to get in the classrooms to determine if you will need to consider environmental accommodations.
- Determine if the college allows food (outside the cafeteria) to come into the building and/or classrooms.
- In the classrooms, check for physically accessible desks and inquire about securing one if one is not already in the classroom.
- Be sure that you will be able to see the whiteboard or projector screen from the location of your desk.
- Examine the size of the room closely and ensure that you can hear the professor if you're located in different parts of the classroom.
- Locate the exit points in the classroom in case you need to leave quickly.
- Evaluate the light source to determine if it may cause migraines or headaches.
- Remember to ask about microphones and other A/V tools that will make lectures more accessible.
- Consider and ask about functional supports, such as note-takers, transcripts or an ASL interpreter.

Notes:



Classroom Accommodations/ Accommodations Process

Once you identify what office you'll need to go through to receive accommodations, ask these questions.

- How long does the intake process for accommodations usually take?
- When should you start the process?
- What documentation will be required for the college to determine reasonable accommodations?
- How long does the determination process take?
- When should you expect to receive an accommodation letter?
- If a professor refuses to acknowledge the accommodations or implement them in their classroom, what is the dispute resolution process?
- How do you notify the office of concerns regarding your accommodations?
- What do you do if your accommodations need to change?
- How does a student file a complaint if an approved accommodation is refused?
- What type of training do college staff receive with regard to their responsibilities under ADA and 504?
- Do you need documentation to use assistive technology in the classroom?"
- Do you need a different mode of communication such as speech to text or text to speech in order to communicate more effectively?
- Can accommodations be provided in a course with a discussion section or required verbal participation
- Can Student Services accommodate for a decreased workload if you need more time and can't handle a full workload?

★ NOTE: This may impact your financial aid eligibility.

Service Animals

- If you require the use of a service animal, be sure to determine the process for bringing a service animal onto campus and where they are allowed.

★ NOTE: Service animals are allowed under ADA/504 with a documented disability. Colleges and universities cannot prevent you from bringing your service animal. An Emotional Support animal, however, may not meet the same requirements.

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Housing and Dining Facilities

Housing

- Could a Personal Care Attendant be given access to on campus housing?
- If you require a Personal Care Attendant, will the college eliminate the housing requirement or provide a housing stipend?
- Can air conditioning and heat be controlled within the room?
- If you need a single room for medical reasons or for disability reasons, ask what documentation you will need to provide to the college (ex: PTSD, anxiety, physical disability requiring space for a wheelchair).

★ NOTE: You do not have to pay more because this is related to your disability.

- Is the dorm furniture accessible to you?
- Will the college eliminate housing expenses if they cannot meet your accommodations?

Dining Facilities

Depending on your medical needs, it may be essential to seek accommodations for dining. Be sure to tour the dining facilities and ask questions.

- Is there "low-glycemic index food" or "sugar-free food" available regularly?
- Is there "gluten-free food" available regularly?
- What documentation is needed to show your dietary requirements?

★ NOTE: Determine if the documentation is required from an allergist or a primary care physician.

- If the school requires a dining plan, can the dining plan expense be reduced or eliminated if dietary restrictions cannot be accommodated?

Notes:



Campus Culture

- Speak to a student and a professor about the school/college/university.
- Speak to an admissions officer about accommodations that can be given during the application process if needed.
- Discuss the self-disclosure process of a disability at the college/school/university.
- Find out which office to go through to request accommodations, such as the student services office or Dean of Students office.
- Recommend that the accommodations office be added to the tour.
- Talk to the Dean of Students to understand the culture at your prospective college/school/university.
 - Disclose as much or as little information about yourself as you see fit.
- Possible questions to ask:
 - Are there disability-specific student organizations or peer support services on campus?

Notes:



Notes and Important Contact Information

Notes:

Important Contact Information:

Name:

Title:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Name:

Title:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Name:

Title:

Email Address:

Phone Number:



Additional Resources

For additional information on transitioning to college as a student with a learning disability, check out these resources:

Autism Speaks: "Ways I Deal with College Stress as a Student on the Spectrum"

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/life-spectrum/ways-i-deal-college-stress-student-spectrum>

Coping strategy tips for individuals with sensory processing disorder:

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/autistic-sensory-sensitivity-on-campus-part-four-coping-strategies/>

Virginia Department for Aging and Disability Services (DARS):

<https://www.dars.virginia.gov/#gsc.tab=0>

I'm Determined

<https://www.imdetermined.org/>

The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC):

<https://peatc.org/>

Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program

<https://www.wvrc.virginia.gov/pert.htm>

Stairway to STEM: Autistic Sensory Sensitivity on Campus

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/autistic-sensory-sensitivity-on-campus-part-one-introduction/>

Stairway to STEM: Autistic and Transitioning to College? What Students and Families Need to Know

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/autistic-and-transitioning-to-college-what-students-and-families-need-to-know/>

Stairway to STEM: Campus Tour for Autistic Students

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/long-form-uc-davis-campus-tour-for-autistic-students/>

Stairway to STEM: Ten Things for Autistic Students to Remember When Choosing College Classes

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/five-things-for-autistic-students-to-remember-when-choosing-college-classes/>

Stairway to STEM: The Ultimate College Guide: Lists, Schedules and Calendars for Autistic Students

<https://www.stairwaytostem.org/the-ultimate-college-guide-lists-schedules-and-calendars-for-autistic-students/>

Think College

<https://thinkcollege.net/>

U.S Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Blog:

<https://sites.ed.gov/osers/>



