

College Visit Checklist for Students With Disabilities

Social/Emotional
Disorders



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 and may seem even more challenging for students with disabilities, but we are here to help. This guide serves as a tool to use during college visits to help you determine if the college or university will meet your specific needs and will be a good fit for you.

Students who experience Emotional Disorders (ex: Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, PTSD) or Autism Spectrum Disorders often have sensory needs. This checklist provides a few things to consider when you're touring colleges and evaluating whether they would be a good fit for you. Since Emotional Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder include a range, all items on this checklist will not be relevant to every student. Take into consideration your personal needs and don't forget to ask the questions YOU really need answered to help you be successful in college.

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



Two-Year: Junior Colleges/ Community Colleges

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Four-Year Colleges and Universities

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STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER
EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA





Classrooms

- Tour the classrooms and lecture halls to determine the seating arrangements and chairs. Determine if the seating arrangement or type of chairs would cause negative sensory input.
- Can adjustments for lighting or temperature be accommodated in the classroom?
- How large is a typical class size?
- Are there large lecture classes?
- How large is a typical lecture hall?
- Are there smaller lab or discussion sections
- Is assistive technology available in the classroom? If so, what permissions do you need to use it?

Housing

- Are you required to live on campus?
- What are the dorm rooms like at the college?
- Will your room be a single or a double?
- Does each dorm room have its own bathroom, or is it a communal bathroom?
- Are you able to dim or brighten the lights in your dorm room?
- Do you need to be able to control the temperature in your dorm room?

Dining

- Does Dining Services accommodate food sensitivities?
- Ask to tour the cafeteria to get a sense of what food is being offered.
- Tour the dining hall to see if it is too noisy for you.
- Does Dining Services have "to go" boxes available if the dining hall is too noisy for you?

Notes:



Classroom Accommodations/ Accommodation Process

- Does the documentation you have match the documentation that the campus is requesting?
- Does Student Services or the Disability Coordinator allow scheduling accommodations?
- Does Student Services or the Disability Coordinator accommodate early or priority registration to allow you to schedule around your needs?
- 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.
- Are alternate testing locations provided, or can you request an alternate testing location?
- The following are common accommodations for students with disabilities that you may need and can request. from the college/university:
 - Note taker or recorded lectures
 - Extended time on tests
 - Extended time on coursework
 - Use of fidgets
 - Seat preference or standing-room

★ NOTE: If you're someone who likes to stand or needs to stand in order to fidget, it might be best to get this accommodation approved through the university. Be sure to let professors know that you are allowed to stand instead of sit.

Notes:



Support Services

- Where is the Office of Student Services located in case you need to visit a counseling office or the disability support office?
- Where is counseling located, if it is not in a Student Services building?
- Does the counseling office or student support services offer a peer support group for students with Autism or other emotional processing disorders?
- Where is tutoring offered, in case you need extra help?
- Is there a writing center if you're someone who struggles with expressive language?
- Are students provided with an academic advisor for all four years?

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:



Campus Culture

- Are you able to request quiet study rooms in the library?
- Is class participation required? If it is required, what forms of participation?
- Is participation graded?
- Are there social opportunities (e.g.: clubs or intramural sports) to support my interests?
- If you feel comfortable, ask a student on campus, or ask your parent/guardian to approach a student with you and ask:
 - Do you feel that professors are accepting of differences?
 - Do you feel that the college community is accepting of differences?

General Questions

- Does the size of the campus make you feel comfortable?
- How many times would you need to tour it to help you?
 - If you toured it multiple times, would you feel confident, or do you think you might feel like you could get lost?
- Do you feel comfortable taking a bus?
 - If you don't feel comfortable taking a bus, how long will it take you to get to different parts of the campus?
 - Is there an app available with a map on it to help you get around campus?
- Is there a space on campus that you could access easily if you needed to de-stress?
- Will the Admissions Office let you sit in on a class during a tour of the campus?

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Housing

- Do you have to live on campus?
- Can you be permitted to live at home all four years if you need to?
- Will you be in a single or double?
 - Can accommodations be made to have a single room if needed?
- Does each dorm room have its own bathroom, or is it a communal bathroom?
- Are you able to dim or brighten the lights in your dorm room?
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Title:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

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Email Address:

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Email Address:

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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/>



