

Guidelines for Requesting Accommodations for the ACT or SAT

Planning for college requires much preparation, even more so if a student has a disability and requires accommodations on college entrance exams. Students with disabilities receiving services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are not automatically entitled to ACT or SAT testing accommodations, but must apply to use them. Because the applications can require substantial documentation and months to process, families of youth with disabilities who plan to attend college and are entering ninth grade should begin preparing, if accommodations are needed.

While there is no specific special education law that entitles students to accommodations on college entrance exams, individuals with disabilities are guaranteed certain protections and rights to equal access to programs and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and ADA amendments of 2008, as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

To access these rights when applying for accommodations on college entrance exams, an individual must present documentation of the disability and the necessity of the requested accommodation. A history of needing the accommodations, as well as records detailing about the accommodations will help your request be successful.

For the ACT, students may request one of the following accommodation categories:

- Standard Time National Testing with Accommodations
- Extended Time National Testing (50 percent time extension)
- Special Testing: Testing at school with extended time and alternate formats available—not as part of national or international testing at a test center.

For details on these categories, visit <http://act.org/aap/disab/index.html>

The request must be supported by documentation of the disability that is written by the diagnosing professional and meets all of the following guidelines:

- States the specific impairment.
- Is current (within three years).
- Describes the presenting problems and developmental history, including relevant educational and medical history.
- Describes the comprehensive assessments (neuropsychological or psycho-educational evaluations). ACT also requires other documentation, depending on the specific disability. Visit <http://act.org/aap/disab/policy.html> for complete details.
- Describes the substantial limitations resulting from the impairment.
- Describes specific recommended accommodations.
- Establishes the professional credentials for the evaluator, including information about licensure or certification, education, and area of specialization.

In order to apply for SAT accommodations see a list of possible accommodations, please visit the CollegeBoard website here: <https://accommodations.collegeboard.org>.

Not all school counselors are experts on the process for getting needed accommodations on college entrance exams for students with disabilities. It is good for parents to be aware that if an initial application is rejected, they can apply again with additional data, such as the Individualized Education Program (IEP) accommodations section, as well as progress notes or letters from teachers, coaches, and others who can substantiate the impact of the disability and the accommodation on the student's learning.

Parents can begin preparing the necessary documentation by making sure their child's accommodations are recorded in the IEP or 504 Plan, along with data that shows how the accommodation benefits the student. Remember that each request for accommodations will be considered on an individual basis. The ACT can also request additional information from parents and students in order to reach a determination.

Resources:

- PACER Center
<http://www.pacer.org/newsletters/pacesetter/fall11.pdf>



Utah Parent Center