

Accommodations Guide



Compiled by Lori Sacrey, MC R. Psych
www.sacreypsychology.com

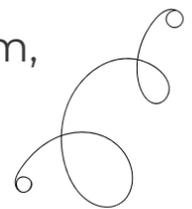
WHAT ARE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Accommodations are supports or adjustments that enable neurodivergent individuals to complete the same tasks, assignments, or examinations as their neurotypical peers.

Importantly, accommodations do not alter expectations, rather they aim to reduce or remove barriers stemming from neurodiversity, creating an equal opportunity for success and ensuring a level playing field.

An accommodation that is universally understood and accepted is glasses. People who have visual acuity differences may not complete tasks as easily as people with 20/20 vision – but put a pair of glasses with the correct prescription – a level playing field!

The following suggestions may help those with Autism, ADHD, or folks who experience distress when in an environment with certain sensory stimuli



SENSORY ACCOMMODATIONS

Includes changes in your environment or strategies that you (and others) can use to help reduce the stress created by sensory information around you



Auditory/ Hearing

- Wear noise-canceling headphones or ear plugs
- Play a white noise machine, music, or podcast to mask background noise
- Private space away from high-traffic areas
- Modify tech to reduce distressing noise (e.g., computer notifications)
- Allow breaks in a quiet location
- Allow remote work when possible



Touch

- Adaptations to dress code to avoid distressing materials and allow use comfortable materials (e.g., cotton)
- Priority seating in area away from high-traffic zones to limit unwanted touches from passersby



Smell/Taste

- Employ scent-free workplace policy
- Use scent-free or low-scent cleaners
- Allow remote work when possible
- Allow use of chewing gum or other flavour stims



Temperature

- Allow use of space heater, fan, blanket, etc.
- If you have heat sensitivity and work outside, request earlier shifts to limit exposure in hotter parts of the day or use of umbrellas for shade
- Allow hot/cold beverages at workstations
- Allow breaks temperature-regulated space
- Allow remote work when possible



Visual/Light

- Use lamps or non-fluorescent lights
- Wear blue tinted glass, sunglasses, and/or a hat
- Provide electronic devices that have a blue light mode or screen protectors
- Allow breaks in a dimly lit setting
- Allow remote work when possible



Movement

- Allow movement breaks in private space
- Allow use of fidgets at workspace
- Provide alternative seating options (wide chairs, bouncy seating, etc.)

The following suggestions may help those with Autism, ADHD, or learning challenges who are attending school, college, or university



SCHOOL ACCOMMODATIONS

Adaptations that can be made to the classroom, schoolwork, assignments, and tests that can be helpful for neurodivergent learners



Assignments

- Allow alternative formats to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, including the use of visual projects rather than written assignments/tests
- Allow additional time to complete assignments that have written components
- Double time and a half for exams and assignments
- Leniency regarding extensions for assignments



Note Taking

- Provision of classroom notes and study guides
- Encourage the use of assistive technology options, including Chromebook or computer, organizational assistive software, spell check, etc



Environment

- Preferential placement of desk to ensure attention to teacher and to facilitate redirection back to task if they become inattentive
- Limit distractions during learning opportunities and other tasks that require focus and concentration.
- Ensure that they are seated in a quiet space that is free of auditory, visual, and other distractors
- Ensure that they are attending before providing them with important information or instructions
- Check back with them to ensure comprehension



Routines

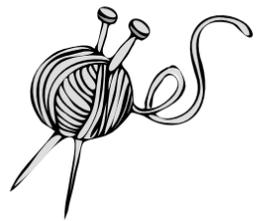
- Encourage the use of regular and predictable schedules and routines
- Having academic schedules provided at least a month ahead of time
- Allow regular breaks between and during learning activities (e.g., every 15-20 minutes)



Teacher Access

- Meet with an instructor prior to starting assignments to ensure you know what is expected
- Check in with instructors in private to ask questions regarding content that you may not understand; this will help reduce the stigma associated with asking for help
- Access to regular tutoring

This following suggestions may help those who have ADHD or who experience challenges sitting still or being fidgety



HYPERACTIVITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Strategies that you and others can use to navigate hyperactivity and the need to move



Fidgeting/ Leaving Seat

- Use fidget toys or stress balls
- Allow private space where they will not disturb others
- Ask them to take notes during meeting/class
- Allow alternative seating (bouncy chair, stress ball, etc.)
- Built in structured breaks that allow for movement
- Allow preferred seating so getting up/leaving area will not distract others
- Allow for outlets of creative side (e.g., drawing, doodling while listening)

This following suggestions may help those with ADHD, Autism, or folks who experience challenges with attention, concentration, and/or executive functioning



ATTENTION ACCOMMODATIONS

Strategies that you and others can use to navigate challenges with attention, and executive functioning



Attention to Details

- Allow a review of work by support person prior to due-dates to allow time for the addition of details, correction of errors, etc.
- Provide list of required details for completeness and best quality
- Ensure person is attending before giving instructions or information
- Allow audio/video recording and note taking
- Follow-up verbal communications with written summary



Staying on Task

- Do tasks requiring the most focus during times of their highest alertness
- Allow for follow-ups for clarification or list of duties
- Use “to-do” check lists as reminders of tasks
- Switch between mundane and interesting tasks
- Include blocks of uninterrupted time in schedule
- Provide warning at least 5 to 10 minute before a shift in focus is required
- Use a timer to help focus or complete tasks
- Use of noise-cancelling headphones or ear buds
- Seating away from sources of distraction – lower traffic areas



Starting and Organizing Tasks

- Develop timeline and due dates (and add extra cushion of time)
- Help breaking tasks down into smaller parts
- Use posted “to do” lists or individual lists that can be checked off
- Use calendar or planning software
- Create and check daily, weekly, and monthly tasks
- Try to limit the number of tasks worked on at a time
- Assign new tasks when previous task is done, if possible
- Create a schedule that allows a break after 30 minutes of boring/repetitive work to stretch for 5 minutes, if possible



Losing Objects/ Forgetfulness

- Create a space for needed items so they are in one, predictable place
- Check belonging before leaving a location
- Use organizers and reminders, timers, alerts and beepers
- Immediately put tasks into calendar

This following suggestions may help those who become distressed when engaging in social interactions

INTERACTIONS ACCOMMODATIONS

Strategies that you and others can use to navigate challenges with social interactions



Interactions

- Offer options to attend virtually or in-person
- Provide option to participate or opt-out of team or group activities
- Understand that some folks may not feel comfortable socializing in a group
- Offer follow-up one-on-one meetings following group activities so they have opportunity to process information and share their thoughts
- Provide written follow-up (such as a meeting minutes) with all topics discussed and any additional follow-up information/tasks

This following suggestions may help neurodivergent communicators who prefer direct, concrete communication that does not rely on non-verbal cues to supplement messages



COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATIONS

Strategies used by the neurodivergent person and those around them to help navigate communication differences and potential misunderstandings



Verbal Communication

- Preference for direct and concrete communication
- Messages delivered with face-value meanings (i.e., say what you mean)
- Avoid innuendo, sarcasm, abstract concepts, or ambiguity (things that can be interpreted in different ways)
- Questions may be asked to support understanding and clarity; this is not argumentative or avoidance of responsibility
- Communication can be honest and blunt, which may be misinterpreted as rudeness or uncaring
- Provide visual information to accompany verbal communication
- If meeting virtually, allow subtitles, transcripts, and/or option to record
- Allow them to write comments that can be read aloud by a support person; do not force verbal communication



Non-Verbal Communication

- Do not request eye contact; some folks find eye-contact distressing
- Tone of voice may not reflect emotional state (may sound bored/angry when in a neutral mood)
- Facial expressions may not reflect emotional state (may look bored/angry when in a neutral mood)
- May not notice others non-verbal communication; communicate your intentions concretely; do not use non-verbal communication to supplement your message



Communication Preferences

- Acknowledge communication differences and needs when assigning tasks, giving feedback, or sharing relevant information
- Allow person to communicate in the way they feel most comfortable (verbally, written, sign language, as follow-up after a conversation)
- If giving feedback, clearly communicate strengths and areas for improvement with actionable, concrete steps

Note: This guide provided an overview of suggested accommodations that many neurodivergent folks find helpful to navigate school, work, and their personal life. The suggested accommodations provided do not cover all possible accommodations, nor will the suggestions work for everyone. Accommodations work best when they are tailored to the person's neurodivergent features and needs.

Information compiled in this resource was referenced from:

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