



Transition to College

Starting college in a new environment can be an exciting time full of firsts. This might be the first time you live without your parents, share a room, or attend a class of 300 students. SSD data from recent academic years shows this was the first time many students with disabilities (28 percent) used accommodations in school. This new experience comes with a greater emphasis on personal responsibility and self-advocacy. For students with disabilities, there may be unique challenges that can seem overwhelming. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) wants to offer you support during this transition by providing information about what to expect. Below are just a few of the differences related to the use of your accommodations in high school and college.

Changes to Accommodations from High School to Postsecondary Education

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
Admissions	Must be provided a free and appropriate education	Must meet all admissions requirements for the University and selected program
Determining Accommodations	Parents, school district, advocates	Student and Disabilities Services Coordinator
Relevant Laws	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Acts (ADA), ADA Amendments Act of 2008
Outcomes	Access to a free and appropriate education	Equal access to, and full participation in, their education
Documentation	School district is responsible for paying for and evaluating students every three years to support academic modifications.	Students are responsible for providing current documentation from a healthcare provider that meets the institution's guidelines. Students will also be asked to share their own unique experience related to their disability and must engage in an interactive process.
Accommodations	Services may include individually designed instruction, assignments, modifications and accommodations based on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan.	Reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids are approved under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that a student has equal access and meaningful participation in their education.
Parental Involvement	Parents may be the most knowledgeable and vocal advocate for their child's accommodation needs. While participation varies, they are likely providing substantial input.	Adult students are responsible for being their own self-advocate. Parents may be involved at the student's request but the student will always be the primary contact and focus of conversation with SSD staff. Students must also initiate any actions.
Monitoring Progress	Parents and teachers may provide frequent reminders of deadlines and are checking to ensure that work has been submitted on time.	Students are responsible for monitoring their own progress, schedule and deadlines. Students are expected to attend office hours or meet with instructors if they have questions. Check-ins and reminders from professors are likely to be infrequent.

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Tips for a Successful Transition to UT

- Choose the right university and major for you and your goals. This is a difficult task for all students when considering the dizzying number of factors involved (finances, location, size, etc.). Consider factors related to your disability and the role of accommodations when considering your options.
- Compare the documentation you already have to our posted documentation guidelines: <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/documentation-guidelines/>. If you have any questions about your documentation, contact SSD to learn more. It may be necessary to get updated documentation.
- Consider how your disability may impact you and what barriers you might experience. Explore our website for common accommodations and services: <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/accommodations-and-services/>. Keep in mind, your accommodations will not be determined until you have accepted admission to UT and completed your SSD intake appointment.
- Practice self-advocacy by asking for the accommodations you need. Consider how you will discuss your need for accommodations with your professors. Remember, you do not have to disclose your disability. Check out this example of a student delivering their accommodation letters to see what to expect. https://youtu.be/mBSLohCY_Co
- Check your email inbox, online course content and course syllabi often for important information and deadlines. You may be experiencing the most freedom you have ever had related to the way you spend time and prioritize responsibilities. Develop time management and organizational skills through self-discipline and new strategies. To strengthen your academic skills, check out the Sanger Learning Center: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc>.
- Many students express difficulty advocating for their accommodation needs with their professors. Practicing self-awareness and self-acceptance can go a long way to setting yourself up to do your best. For self-advocacy skills, check out the Student Ombuds Services: <https://ombuds.utexas.edu/student> or SSD's "Tips for Self Advocacy" Handout.
- The Forty Acres is vast and can require some adjustment and additional time to navigate. Download the UT mobile app for a digital map of the buildings on campus. Learn where your classes are before they begin and think about your route of travel. Go to this site for a map of accessible entrances: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1B_X9WRe0kkTIPbfYpmOQz7pHSQs&ll=30.285304830346195%2C-97.73454844798334&z=16.
- Remember, you do not have to navigate UT alone; there are many dedicated faculty and staff to help you reach your full potential. In fact, over 45% of SSD students from the fall 2019 reported that they were referred to SSD by at least one UT resource. It will be important to identify when you need help, how to locate the applicable resource(s) and how to communicate with people who can help. Communicate with your college academic advisor or your assigned SSD Disability Services Coordinator as soon as possible. In your first semester, it may be helpful to set a deadline to self-evaluate your progress, determine if there are areas you want to improve upon, and reach out when you are in need of assistance.
- UT is a unique environment of over 50,000 students from diverse backgrounds and sometimes it can be easy to feel isolated. We encourage you to explore the many organizations UT has to offer in order to meet peers and make your mark! Check out SSD's organizations <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/support-groups/> or HornsLink: <https://utexas.campuslabs.com/engage/organizations> for campus organizations.

Want to Learn More about Accommodations in College?

- **Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education:** <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>
- **Services for Students with Disabilities at the University of Texas** <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/making-the-transition/>
- **National Center for College Students with Disabilities** <http://www.nccsdonline.org/>

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