

Accommodations

Accommodations and Modifications for the Classroom

What does it mean to say that a person has a learning difference or a disability? There is no single common profile for an adult education student with a learning difference – it is an extremely heterogeneous group. Some students in the GED® preparation classroom may have diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabilities, whereas other students may exhibit Attention Deficit Disorder, either with or without hyperactivity. Other students may have cognitive deficits, visual or auditory impairments, or emotional handicaps.

The important thing to remember is that all students in adult general education programs benefit from the use of effective instructional practices. Although much attention is paid to the unique characteristics of a disability, it is important to remember that changes may be needed in the way lessons are taught and assessment tools are administered when working with individuals with disabilities.

For students with documented disabilities who meet minimum program eligibility requirements, federal law guarantees them the necessary modifications and accommodations that will allow them to participate and receive benefit of instruction. Such modifications, accommodations, and support services are not designed to give students an advantage over classmates or to lower the expected program standards. Instead, they are simply designed to minimize the disability and allow students the fullest opportunity to compete equally.

So, what is an accommodation? An accommodation is an alteration in the way learning tasks are undertaken so that

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"Not all individuals can be fairly tested under standard administrations of regular print editions of the GED® test. In such cases, accommodated administrations may be arranged at the request of the candidate and with the approval of the Chief Examiner and the GED Administrator . . ."

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students with learning differences can complete the same type of tasks as other students in the classroom.

Strategies for the Classroom

Research has provided the adult educator with evidence-based interventions and practices to assist students in the learning process. The following are a few evidence-based instructional techniques to assist students with learning differences, specifically those students with learning disabilities.

Strategy Instruction

Students with difficulty learning benefit from the explicit teaching of various learning strategies. Strategy instruction uses a top-down approach to emphasize processes applicable across different settings. Transferable strategies include such skills as summarizing strategies. It is important to realize that many students have never been taught “how” to learn. Explicit instruction of strategies provides them with skills necessary for success.

To implement explicit instruction:

- provide clear explanations of content, skills, learning routines, and strategies
- model the cognitive and metacognitive behaviors associated with the learning task
- co-construct with students the strategies and routines to make learning efficient and effective
- engage students in extensive practice that includes guided and independent activities and elaborated feedback on each performance
- provide support for generalizing skills, knowledge, and strategies for learning

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction uses a bottom-up approach of teaching subskills to master basic skills and/or concepts. This strategy actively involves students through frequent responding and participative activities. With direct instruction, the goals and objectives of the lesson should be clearly stated at the beginning of class, tying the material to real-world situations.

Direct Instruction Model

Task	Explanation
Provide objectives, establish expectations, and introduce the skill/concept	Activate background knowledge, involve students, relate to real life, label the learning, and set goals
Introduce and the model the skill/concept	<p>Teacher performs the skill (students use eyes and ears).</p> <p>Teacher performs the skill; students help (students use eyes, ears, and voices).</p> <p>Students perform the skill; teacher helps (students use eyes, ears, voices, and materials, e.g., pencils, manipulatives, etc.).</p> <p>Students perform the skill (students use materials).</p>
Use guided practice with feedback	Students use their new skills with teacher supervision. Can use peer tutoring or cooperative learning.
Close the lesson	Students tell someone what they have learned, show what they have learned, and practice once more.
Use independent practice and generalization.	Students practice independently, completing a problem every day. Discuss how the skill/concept can be transferred to other settings.

Integrating strategy and direct instruction provides the foundation that many students with learning difficulties require in order to be successful.

Other Strategies

Help students identify techniques that might be helpful in accommodating their learning differences by integrating the following types of strategies.

Introduce lessons effectively

- Tape record or videotape the instructions
- Make announcements in both oral and written forms, especially changes in schedule, directions, assignments, or exams
- Have a model of the finished product available for review
- Show by example
- Make directions specific, concrete, and understandable
- Tell student what the whole lesson will concern, and explain what will be done first, second, and so on
- Give a number of options for completing assignments
- Review major points of previous sessions
- Preview main points to be covered
- Outline points in several ways written on the board, presented orally, and outlined in a handout
- Make clear transitions from one task to another

Identify and employ methods that work for adults

- Build on strengths rather than repeating weaknesses
- Make eye contact frequently to help maintain attention and encourage participation
- Teach new concepts by relating them to practical applications
- Be sure reading material is at the right level for the learner
- Be sure print type is large enough
- Relate material to everyday situations
- Use language experience approaches and reading materials from the home and work environment to stimulate interest
- Build on what the student knows, making learning developmental, not remedial
- Probe “incorrect” responses to discover thought processes
- Teach students to correct their own mistakes
- Do not assume that the learner knows something until you ask or teach it
- Be creative and attempt to vary your teaching style
- Encourage students to sit in the front of classroom where they can hear well and have a clear view of the chalkboard
- Keep the learning environment free of visual and auditory distraction
- Establish a routine; this promotes organization and consistency
- Use multi-sensory strategies to present materials: many learners must see, say, hear, and touch before they develop full mental images that make sense

Identify and employ methods that work to reach adult learners

- Provide short-term tasks with short breaks between tasks.
- Be flexible with time schedules; work quotas should be adjusted to fit the work speed of each learner.
- Repeat the activity until learning is accomplished and provide opportunities to review.
- Vary your lessons, re-teaching and reviewing in varieties of ways.
- Respect different learning styles.
- Use materials that relate to individuals' experiences.
- Change an activity when it is not working.
- De-emphasize timed tests.
- Use formulas or rhymes to assist with memory.
- Use color whenever possible for visual impact.
- Work with other teachers/professionals and ask for ideas or opinions.
- Incorporate keyboards (word processors or typewriters) into the lessons as much as possible. Studies show that some learners can produce more writing with a word processor than they can with a pencil or pen.
- Encourage the use of learning aids and tools (e.g., record, calculators, highlighter pens, extra worksheets, computerized learning programs, tape recorders, films, demonstrations maps, charts, experiences fingers, rulers).
- Provide the student with opportunities to repeat verbally what has been taught as a check for accuracy.
- Encourage the learner to find a mentor in addition to the tutor to review information and apply classroom skills to practical situations.
- Talk with students about their learning process. Ask them what does and does not work for them.
- Suggest reinforcement activities to be used at home, e.g., posting new words on refrigerator door, repeated listening to a tape vocabulary words, watching recommended educational television programs.

Create a positive environment that fosters self-esteem in students and encourages them

- Do not embarrass, insinuate laziness or discourage an individual publicly or privately.
- Reduce emphasis on competition and perfection.
- Praise the learner's accomplishments at the end of every session.
- Communicate to students that you value them through smiling, listening, and eye contact.
- Incorporate a sense of humor into the learning process.
- Praise what you might consider small or minor successes.
- Reinforce the effort and progress of the student.
- Teach to each student's strengths and make each student a "star."

Identify and Adapt to Learning Styles

It is important to use the previous strategies when making modifications for adult students with learning disabilities. Remember to use those strategies that work best in relation to the student's learning style. Keeping students' preferred learning style in mind and pairing that information with strategies that enhance strengths and minimize deficits will increase opportunities for success.



Resources

For additional information on accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, access:

- Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Disabilities in Career Education and Adult General Education
http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/311201_acmod-voc.pdf
- Adult Basic Education Disability Manual. Minnesota's LD Portal
<http://manual.abedisabilities.org/>
- Learning to Achieve. LINCS
<http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/learningtoachieve/materials.html>
- National Center for Learning Disabilities.
<http://www.nclد.org/adults-learning-disabilities?gclid=CLnh2ovBgbCFcLc4AodXVcAKA>
- National Attention Deficit Association
<http://www.add.org/>

Accommodations for the GED® test

The purpose of accommodations is to provide candidates with full access to the GED® test. However, accommodations are not a guarantee of improved performance or test completion. The GED Testing Service® (GEDTS) is committed to ensuring access to the GED® test for all individuals with disabilities and supports the intention of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act, known as ADAAA.

Every candidate for the GED® test should have a fair opportunity to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills under reasonable and appropriate test conditions. For some candidates, a disability may interfere with their ability to fully demonstrate what they know under standard testing conditions.

Learning disabilities, for example, can affect a person's ability to store, process, and/or produce information. A learning disability can also affect the ability to read, write, speak, do math, and socialize. Many physical disabilities can affect a person's ability to sit for long periods of time, to write using a pencil and paper, or to read normal-sized print.

Accommodations are available for candidates who have diagnosed physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive disabilities and who provide the appropriate documentation.

To receive accommodations on the GED® test, students must ensure that the appropriate accommodations request form is completed. This information is located on the GED Testing Service website at: <http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/accommodations-for-disability>

Common Accommodations for the GED® Test

What accommodations are available on the GED® test for people with disabilities? The following are common accommodations for each of the specific areas of disabilities.

Physical/Chronic Health Condition

- 25%, 50%, or 100% extended time
- Private room
- Supervised breaks
- Audiocassette
- Braille GED® test
- Scribe
- Talking calculator

Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities

- Extended time – 25%, 50%, or 100%
- Supervised breaks
- Audiocassette with extended time
- Scribe
- Talking calculator

Emotional/Psychological/Psychiatric Disabilities

- Extended time – 25%, 50%, 100%
- Private room
- Supervised breaks

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- Extra time - 25%
- A 10-minute break for each test-section
- Use of large print

Intellectual Disabilities

- Extended time – 25%, 50%, or 100%
- Supervised breaks
- Audiocassette with extended time
- Scribe
- Testing in a private room or reduced-distraction room

It's important to remember that in order to obtain accommodations, students must have a diagnosed disability that requires specific accommodations and must complete the appropriate forms. Test accommodations are individualized and considered on a case-by-case basis. Consequently, no single type of accommodation (e.g. extra time) would necessarily be appropriate for all individuals with disabilities. Simply demonstrating that an individual meets diagnostic criteria for a particular disorder does not mean that the person is automatically entitled to accommodations.

Remember that whatever accommodations are allowed on the GED® test should also be implemented in the classroom.



Resources

For additional information on accommodations from the GED Testing Service®, access:

- Accommodations from GED Testing Service®
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/accommodations-for-disability>
- What accommodations are available on the GED Test for people with disabilities?
<http://www.youtube.com/gedtestingservice>