

Tips for Working with Students with Various Types of Disabilities

- *BLIND/VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS*

- Read anything written on the board or overhead out loud.
- For longer assignments, establish word limits instead of page numbers in case the student needs to use a larger font.
- Ensure that the aisles of the classroom are kept clear at all times.
- In smaller classes where participation is integral to the course, say the name of the student when responding to a question so the student with a visual impairment knows who is speaking.
- Provide copies of handouts to Student Disability Services as early as possible so they may be enlarged.
- If a service animal is present in your class, refrain from focusing on it. Do not pet the dog unless given permission by the student, and never give the dog treats.

- *TEMPORARY, CHRONIC, AND PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES*

- Students with serious medical or psychiatric disabilities may have unpredictable acute phases which require treatment or hospitalization. Although you do not need to compromise essential components of the course, try to be flexible in working with the student to determine how he or she can still get the most out of the class.
- Students who present a Faculty Accommodation Memo Letter listing flexibility with attendance should have a very specific discussion with you at the beginning of the semester regarding reasonable limits to this accommodation.

- The nature of these types of disabilities can change throughout the semester. If a student requests a modification in accommodations, be sure to ask the student to present you with an updated Faculty Accommodation Memo.

- ***DEAF/HEARING IMPAIRMENTS***

- Look at the class when speaking and avoid pacing. Speak like you normally would, and avoid exaggerations.
- Avoid standing with your back to a window or other light source. The glare can make it difficult to read lips and facial expressions.
- Repeat questions or comments made by others in the classroom before answering.
- Be aware that if the student is using a sign language interpreter, it may take him or her longer to respond since there is a slight delay between what is said and the student receiving the message.
- The grammar used in American Sign Language (ASL) is different from English language grammar. Thus, be aware that such errors on written work do not reflect the intellectual ability of the student.
- When speaking with a student who uses an ASL interpreter, always address comments and questions to the student.

- ***PHYSICAL AND MOBILITY-RELATED***

- When possible, Student Disability Services will notify you in advance if you are using a physically inaccessible classroom for a course which a student with a physical or mobility-related disability has registered. In this event, SDS will work to facilitate a classroom change and notify you of the change as soon as possible.
- If your office is inaccessible, speak with the student about an alternate private location to meet.

- If you are planning an event or field trip outside of the classroom, be mindful of the accessibility of the space you are visiting and how you plan to get there. Contact Student Disability Services for assistance in securing accessible transportation. Give advance notice of any location changes.
- Students with physical or mobility-related disabilities may be late to class when classes are scheduled back-to-back or there are weather related issues. Understanding on your part is useful in these situations. However, if you notice constant tardiness, speak with the student. If his or her explanation is unrelated to the disability, handle the issue as you would with any other student.
- Keep classroom aisles clear.

- ***LEARNING AND ATTENTION-RELATED***

- Cater to different learning styles by alternating how information is presented. Some students may learn best through listening, while others will be visual or hands-on learners.
- At the beginning of the semester, provide all students with your office hours and information on accessing campus tutoring services.
- Be prepared to provide a reasonable amount of extra help to students with learning and attention-related disabilities, as they may need information repeated.
- While rude and disruptive behavior should never be tolerated in the classroom, students with learning and attention-related disabilities may display non-disruptive but inattentive behaviors (such as staring out the window during lecture). Understand that such behaviors are sometimes used as a coping strategy in difficult or tiring learning situations.

- *AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS*

- Be sure to give clear and concrete instructions on assignments and deadlines.
- Try to give structure and organization to lectures by highlighting main points first and summarizing at the end.
- Provide visual representations of class material when possible.
- Encourage the student to participate when doing group work without singling him or her out.
- Understand that it is often times much easier for students with autism spectrum disorders to communicate via e-mail rather than in person.
- If the student becomes disruptive in class, handle the situation as you would with any other student.
- Allow the student to step out of the classroom for a few minutes if he or she becomes especially anxious or agitated.