

Student Planning Guide: Testing and Accommodations

National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes

GED

ACT

SAT

GRE

TASC

TOEFL

ACCUPLACER



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① *Indicates terms found in the glossary*

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Overview

This step-by-step guide explains how to request and use accommodations on exams to help you meet your goals after high school. Accommodations can reduce testing barriers for many deaf students and allow them a fair chance to show their knowledge and skills. There are a variety of tests that you may take and request accommodations for, as explained below.

Types of Tests



High School Equivalency Exams

In some cases, your high school transition plan includes taking a test that is an alternative to the regular high school diploma. Common equivalency exams include the **GED**, **HiSET**, and **TASC**. (?)



College Entrance Exams

Colleges and universities sometimes use entrance exams to help see whether you are prepared to be successful there. Usually, these exams test reading, writing, and math knowledge, skills, and abilities. Common entrance exams include the **ACT** and **SAT** (?) for undergraduate college entrance and the **GRE** and **GMAT** (?) for graduate college entrance.



College Placement Exams

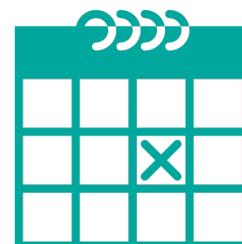
Many colleges and universities use placement exams to help determine which courses are the best starting point for your academic program. For example, some students may need to take basic math or English classes before they take the first college-level course. In some cases, the college entrance exam serves as a placement exam. Common placement exams include the **ACCUPLACER**, **TOEFL**, **ACT**, **SAT**, (?) and state- or college-specific exams.

Step 1: Gather Information About the Test

Start planning early! Registration information, testing dates, costs, and accommodation request procedures are typically provided on the testing company's website. Sometimes you may find a guide or other resources online or at bookstores for purchase. The following sections cover some of the most important information to collect.

General Information

- Test dates available: _____
- Test registration deadline: _____
- Accommodations request deadline: _____
- Test fees: _____



Note: Some tests have scholarships or waive fees!

Who Can I Ask for Help?

Ask parents, teachers, or school counselors to help you navigate each step and gather the documentation you need, such as your individualized education program (IEP), transition plan, accommodations needs, school grades, and possibly medical records.

Test Structure

1. Is the test given on paper or on a computer? _____
If given on a computer, can you skip a question and go back to it later? (Y / N)
2. Is there a time limit? (Y / N) If Yes, how much time do you get? _____
3. How is the test scored? Will points be taken off for wrong answers, or is it OK to guess if you don't know the answer? _____
4. Is audio or video material used during the exam? (Y / N)
5. Will you be required to respond to questions verbally? (Y / N)

Question Format and Test Content



Essay



Short answer



Multiple choice or true/false



Other: _____

Reading Writing Math Other: _____

Science Social Studies Foreign Language: _____

What Is My Goal Score?

For many colleges and universities, certain scores may be required for admission or completion. Knowing the score range or the minimum can help you practice for the test and get your desired score!

Subject or Section	My Goal Score	Actual Score

Step 2: Request Accommodations

First, it is important to understand what testing accommodations are a best fit for **you**. Talk with your parents, teachers, or school counselors to explore which test accommodations are right for you.

If you have experience with test accommodations, think about what has been helpful. What have you used in class and on other kinds of tests? Before requesting accommodations, be sure you know how to describe the accommodations you need and why you need them. If you are requesting an interpreter, include information about interpreter certification and your preferred signing style. See [Why Deaf Individuals May Need Accommodations When Taking Tests](#) for more information.

Practice Describing the Accommodations You Need

"I am requesting [extended time, a separate testing room, an assistive listening device, a sign language interpreter] for this test because _____

Rules for requesting accommodations are typically found on the testing company's website and can sometimes be found in test preparation books. If you cannot find this information, contact the company directly.

Consider the following questions when requesting accommodations:



- **What** accommodations are generally accepted for this test?
- **When** must requests be submitted to the testing company?
- **What** documentation do you need to submit with your request (e.g., doctor's notes, audiogram, IEP)?
- **Where** do you submit the request?
- **What** do you need to bring with you (e.g., your own assistive technology)?
- **When** will you receive an answer on whether the request was approved?
- **Whom** do you contact with questions?

Accommodation request forms generally have a write-in space for adding accommodations that are not listed. Use the write-in space to add to your request.

Common Accommodations for Testing

Extended Time



Separate Room



Assistive Listening Devices



Sign Language Interpreters



In some cases, you might need to bring your own equipment, such as your hearing aid, cochlear implant, or assistive listening system (FM/DM system). Some equipment might require help to set up (e.g., FM system), so be sure to check with the site ahead of time if you have questions.

If the testing organization has approved a sign language interpreter, contact the testing company to understand the rules. Ask the following:

- Can you meet with the interpreter before the test day to practice?
- Can you meet the interpreter on the day of testing before the test?
- Which parts of the test can you use the interpreter for? Can you use the interpreter for instructions only, test questions, or other sections?

Audio, Video, or Speaking Portions of an Exam



Audio and video components should be accessible to all test takers. When making a request for accommodations, ask the testing company about the following:

- Audio-only sections: Is a transcript available? If not, request a transcript.
- Video sections: Are the videos captioned? If not, request closed captioning.

If the test requires you to respond verbally (e.g., the **TOEFL**  or tests of English-language skills) and you prefer to use American Sign Language or an alternative method such as writing a response, include that in your request for accommodations.

Will All Accommodations be Approved?

Sometimes accommodations are not provided for specific sections or questions on a test. Also, a testing company may not allow a particular accommodation if it changes what the test is measuring. For example, a test may not allow a sign language interpreter during a reading skills section but allow an interpreter for other sections.

Appealing a Denial of Accommodations

Sometimes, a testing organization will deny an accommodation request. You can **appeal**  a **denial**  of your accommodation request, though keep in mind that it will take time and effort.

1. Review the reasons given for the denial of accommodations.
2. Research the testing organization's policies about appealing denials, either found in the letter to you or in informational materials on the organization's website.
3. Ask a parent, teacher, or counselor for help when writing an appeal request.
4. Send the appeal paperwork to the testing company.

Step 3: Create a Study Plan

- Review the content areas (e.g., math, English, reading, science) and types of questions (multiple choice, essay, short answer, true/false) that you will need to practice.
- Set a schedule of weekly test preparation time and what you will focus on each week.
- Build in times to take practice tests to see which subjects you need to study more.

PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!

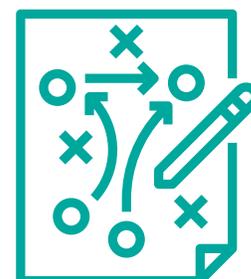
Often, testing organizations provide practice questions and/or practice tests. Use these materials to get an accurate feel for the test. If possible, practice with the accommodations you will use so that you feel more comfortable during the real test. Depending on how much time you have to prepare, try breaking down and practicing each portion of the test and then attempting a complete mock test when you feel ready. This will give you a sense of how much time it takes to answer the questions.

There are also books, apps, and other practice materials that are not made by the testing company. For these materials, ask for recommendations from your parents, teachers, and counselors.

Remember, practice makes perfect!

Strategies for Practice

- Study and practice over an extended period of time and avoid cramming!
- Follow the directions given to you before the test.
- Read all the instructions carefully.
- When given answer options, eliminate answers you know are wrong first.
- Mark answers clearly and as instructed.
- Write any handwritten responses clearly.
- Pace yourself, especially for timed tests.



Step 4: Prepare to Take the Test

Final Preparations

- Note the test location address: _____
- Note the test room: _____
- Ensure that your equipment is in working condition.
- Check with the test organization about what you can and cannot bring into the testing room (e.g., food, water, calculator, smartphone, headphones).
- Prepare the following materials to bring with you to the test:
 - Copy of your accommodations approval letter (e-mail or written letter)
 - Copy of your test registration confirmation (e-mail or written letter)
 - List of colleges and universities to send your scores
 - Driver's license or other identification card if required
 - Extra batteries for hearing aids, cochlear implants, and FM/DM systems
 - Any permitted testing supplies (e.g., scratch paper, pens and pencils, calculators)
 - Snacks and water bottle if permitted
- Get a good night's rest the night before your test.

Test Day

- Arrive at the test site early, with enough time to find your testing room and to check in.
- Sign in and provide your accommodations approval letter to the test **proctor**. (?)
- If possible, meet with the interpreter before the test begins.

What if Your Approved Accommodation Was Not Provided?

Be prepared to advocate for yourself. If an accommodation approved for you is not available on the day of the test, ask the test proctor how to register a complaint with the test company. If you can't file a complaint on site, contact the testing company as soon as possible afterward. Follow up with the test company if you do not receive a timely response.

Step 5: Review Scores and Additional Materials

There are a couple things to do after you receive your test scores.

First, review your scores with a high school counselor or college admission counselor. Discuss what the scores mean for college acceptance or placement decisions. If the test scores are lower than what you want, consider taking the test again.

Next, consider all of the information that you will submit for admissions or applications, in addition to the test scores. Most colleges look at many things when making a decision about acceptance or class placement, including the following:

- Personal statements
- Letters of support
- Transcripts of coursework
- Work samples and portfolios
- Awards and honors
- Community service
- Athletic accomplishments

Additional Resources

Why Deaf Individuals May Need Accommodations When Taking Tests

nationaldeafcenter.org/testaccommodations

National Center on Educational Outcomes: Accessibility and Accommodations for General Assessments

nceo.info/Assessments/general_assessment/accommodations

Office for Civil Rights: Students With Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education

www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html

More information on this topic can be found at nationaldeafcenter.org/resources

Glossary

ACCUPLACER (<https://accuplacer.collegeboard.org>) is a placement test to assess a person's skills in a subject area to determine which course level to begin with in that subject. The College Board is the publisher for the ACCUPLACER.

ACT (www.act.org), formerly known as the American College Testing Program, is a college entrance admissions test to measure a high school student's readiness to complete college-level coursework.

Appeal is the process of formally challenging a denial, which may include several different methods, such as submitting additional evidence, setting up a hearing, or providing further justification for a request.

Denial is the rejection of an accommodation request.

GED (www.gedtestingservice.com), the General Education Development, or General Education Diploma, is a high school equivalency credential for a regular high school diploma.

GMAT (www.mba.com/exams/gmat), the Graduate Management Admissions Test, is used for admissions to graduate business school programs.

GRE (www.ets.org/gre), the Graduate Record Examinations, measures skills for admissions to graduate college programs.

HiSET (www.hiset.ets.org), the High School Equivalency Test, is a high school equivalency credential of a regular high school diploma.

Proctor is a person who manages the testing site and keeps watch over students as they take an examination.

SAT (www.collegeboard.org), the Scholastic Assessment Test, measures a high school student's readiness for college-level coursework. It is published by the College Board.

TASC (www.tasctest.com), the Test Assessing Secondary Completion, is a high school equivalency credential of a regular high school diploma.

TOEFL (www.ets.org/toefl), formerly known as the Test of English as a Foreign Language, measures the English knowledge and proficiency of nonnative English speakers.

