

Applerouth's Guide to **SECURING TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS**



www.applerouth.com | info@applerouth.com | 866-789-PREP (7737)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Accommodations Fast Facts	2
Accommodations FAQs.....	3-5
Accommodations Context and Key Terms	6-7
Securing Accommodations for the SAT + ACT—an Overview.....	8
Applying for Accommodations	9
College Board Tests.....	10-15
The ACT.....	16-19
Accommodations on Test Day.....	20
Appealing an Accommodations Decision	21
The Accommodations Process for Homeschooled Students	22
Resources for Educators and Parents	23-24



Call to Action Icon: If you see this call to action icon, pay close attention. We've used it to highlight vital steps in the process.

© 2020 Applerouth Tutoring Services. SAT® is a trademark registered and/or owned by the College Board, which was not involved in the production of, and does not endorse, this product. ACT® is a registered trademark of ACT, Inc. which was not involved in the production of, and does not endorse, this product. PSAT/NMSQT® is a registered trademark of the College Board and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation which were not involved in the production of, and do not endorse, this product. Test names are the property of the respective trademark holders, none of whom endorse or are affiliated with Applerouth Tutoring Services. The information in Applerouth's Guide to Securing Testing Accommodations is valid as of February 2020.



Introduction

Students who learn differently often need to test differently as well. That's why the CollegeBoard and ACT, Inc allow students who receive learning accommodations in school to apply for accommodations on the SAT and ACT. Applying for accommodations on the SAT and ACT can be complicated, so we've created this resource to help our students, parents and educators understand the process from beginning to end.

In this guide, you'll find the answers to these questions and many more:

- How do I know if my student needs accommodations?
- When should we start the process of applying for accommodations?
- What documentation will we need?
- How does the application process work?
- How long does the application process take?
- What should I do if a student's request was denied?

We've also included step-by-step guides to the accommodations request process for both the SAT and ACT, as well as some historical context and best practices.

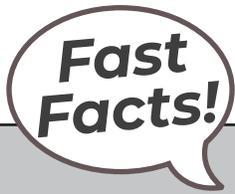
Whether you are a student, a parent, a school or an independent counselor, we hope you find this guide helpful as you navigate the standardized testing journey. As always, our goal is to empower our students to show their best on test day, and we hope the information in this resource will help you to do the same.

–The Applerouth Accommodations Team

Like everything we do at Applerouth, this resource was a team effort from initial research to final printing. Many thanks to our Accommodations Team: Komel Caruso, Diana Cohen, Ginger Fay, Lauren James, Katie Rose-DeLaet, and Jenna Berk.

Accommodations Fast Facts

The accommodations request process can be complicated. Here are some fast facts for quick reference.



	PSAT + SAT	ACT
Where are requests submitted and managed?	Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Online	Test Accessibility and Accommodations (TAA) Online System
Who can access the online system?	Schools only (work with your school's "SSD Coordinator" to submit)	Schools only (work with your school's ACT "Test Coordinator" to submit)
Do I have to register for a test before I request accommodations?	No	Yes
I have a learning disability. How recent does my psychoeducational evaluation need to be?	Within the last 5 years	Within the last 3 academic years
How long do I need to have had and used formal school accommodations before submitting a request?	Four months (Note: in our experience, the College Board is more likely to grant requests for students who have used accommodations for at least one school year)	One year
When is the accommodations request deadline? ¹	Deadlines vary but typically fall six to seven weeks before the test date.	No later than the test date registration deadline.
Once I submit my request, how long will it take to receive a response?	Up to seven weeks	Up to two weeks (often much faster if the first request includes all the right documentation)
How long do my accommodations last? Do I need to submit a new request for each test I take?	Generally speaking, accommodations remain in place until one year after high school graduation and apply to any SAT, PSAT, SAT Subject Test, AP Exam you take during that time. You do not need to submit a new request through SSD online.	ACT accommodations apply to the specific test you registered for when you made your initial request. To apply the accommodations to future tests, you need to ask your school's Test Coordinator to update your test dates in the TAA system.
How do I contact the testing company?	Contact SSD Email: ssd@info.collegeboard.org Phone: 212-713-8333 Fax: 866-360-0114 College Board SSD Program P.O. Box 7504 London, KY 40742-7504	Call ACT, Inc. at 319-337-1332



Overall, the ACT is more skeptical of a recent diagnosis.

¹For specific deadline dates, please refer to the College Board and ACT websites, referenced in the Resources for Educators and Parents section on page 23. Timely submission requires planning ahead for all the steps involved. The Step-by-Step guides to the application process (on pages 10-15 for College Board tests and pages 16-19 for The ACT) provide more detail.

Accommodations FAQs

This guide contains all the information parents, students, and educators need to know about applying for testing accommodations, which means it's very thorough! For simplicity's sake, we've decided to start off with some of the most frequently asked questions we get from parents when it comes to testing accommodations.

How do I know if my student needs accommodations?

If your student receives accommodations in school—or has a disability that would significantly impact their ability to perform on a timed test—then they may be eligible to receive accommodations on the SAT, ACT, or PSAT.

What kind of documentation will I need to provide?

The more recent and thorough a student's documentation is, the stronger the case for accommodations will be. If your student already has a record of accommodations in school (through an IEP, 504 Plan, or other formal plan), then you may not be required to provide additional documentation. However, if your request is denied, then you may choose to appeal the decision; in that case, you'd need additional documentation, such as:

- 1) A formal diagnosis from a qualified professional (e.g., a complete psychoeducational evaluation from a licensed clinical psychologist)
- 2) Other documents that tell your story (e.g., letters from teachers or tutors, report cards, or progress reports that document the positive impact that the proposed accommodations have on student performance)

For more information on documentation, please see the [Applying for Accommodations](#) section on page 9.

What types of accommodations are available?

While many people immediately think of extended time when they think of standardized testing accommodations, there are a variety of accommodations designed to suit the particular needs of students with a host of different disabilities. For example, a student who is a new English Language Learner can apply to have access to a word-for-word dictionary on the ACT; a student with eye strain can apply to have a test booklet with 20 point font from the College Board. Some of the most requested, and granted, accommodations include a distraction-limited environment (being able to test in a small group or in a preferred location like near the front of the room), extended time (either 50% or 100%), multiple day testing (in the case of the ACT), marking answers directly in the test booklet, stop-the-clock breaks and assistive technology (like using a word processor to type essay responses).

Q Will the colleges a student applies to be aware that the student received accommodations on standardized testing?

Absolutely not. Students with learning differences are protected by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. In the past, tests taken with extended time were marked with an asterisk; however, it is **illegal** for the testing companies to “flag” tests taken with accommodations. Your student’s accommodations and disability information is strictly confidential.

Q How do I apply for accommodations for my student?

While both agencies expect students to work with their schools to apply for accommodations, the timing and initiation of the process differs with each.

For accommodations on College Board administered exams (the PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests and Advanced Placement Exams), the student asks their school’s Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Coordinator to apply for accommodations on their behalf. Applications can be initiated anytime up to about two months before the proposed test date. For example, applications for accommodations on the PSAT (generally taken in October of a student’s junior year) are due in August, before some schools are back in session, so it is in the student’s best interest to apply during the prior school year—or earlier, if possible. Applications for accommodations on AP Exams are due in January.

For the ACT, the student, rather than the school, initiates the process, though the school will be responsible for following up and submitting the required documentation. When a student registers for the ACT, they indicate that they wish to apply for accommodations, which generates an email that the student then forwards to their school’s Test Accessibility and Accommodations (TAA) Coordinator. From there, the TAA Coordinator completes the application process and notifies the student when a decision has been reached. The deadline to apply for accommodations is the same as the regular deadline for registration for a given test date, but students should apply for accommodations as early as possible so that they can prepare for the test knowing what accommodations to expect on test day.

For more information, see pages 9–19.

Q What should a student with accommodations expect on test day?

On test day, a student can expect to be granted the accommodations specified in their accommodations letter; these may not be the exact accommodations they initially requested, so it’s important to read and understand the letter. If your student is testing with accommodations, you should plan to arrive at the testing site early to ensure that the proper accommodations are in place.

For more information, see page 20.

Q Do accommodations expire?

For the College Board, once accommodations are granted they are typically in place until a year after the student graduates from high school for every test the College Board administers (PSAT, SAT, Subject Tests and AP Exams), though there are some exceptions. For example, a student who receives accommodations for Extended and Stop the Clock Breaks on the PSAT because of a recent diagnosis of Lyme Disease may be asked to reapply for accommodations the following year to determine if the student is still symptomatic.

For the ACT, students have to “apply” for accommodations with each test registration, but accommodations that have previously been granted—and used—are usually granted on subsequent test dates, assuming the student still has the support of their school.

For either test it is essential to review the decision letter from the testing agency since it will clarify what accommodations have been granted (or denied) and when those accommodations might expire. A student is always able to appeal the testing agency’s decision or reapply with additional documentation if needed (*see page 21 for more information*).

“My daughter got a 32 on the ACT, including a massive 12-pt score gain on the reading section. She is dyslexic, and I never would have imagined an almost perfect score in the reading section. This whole experience has made my daughter a much more confident student.”

—Parent, Atlanta Metropolitan Area



Accommodations Key Terms and Context

To fully understand the accommodations process, it helps to know a little bit about the way student disabilities are treated in the educational and legal world. There are three federal laws that protect the rights of individuals with disabilities:

- 1) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
- 2) The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),
- 3) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504).

While the laws overlap to some extent, each has a different reach and affords different rights, depending on the setting and nature of the student's disability.² This guide will reference each of these laws, 504 plans, IEPs (Individualized Educational Plan), and the importance of documentation; here's a deeper dive into what those mean.

Testing accommodations and the ADA

When it comes to receiving accommodations on high-stakes standardized tests, the rights of students with disabilities are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); in 2010, the federal government published updated regulations concerning accommodations on standardized tests, including the SAT and ACT.³ According to the regulations, **standardized testing agencies must grant accommodations to test-takers who demonstrate their need by providing documentation which is "reasonable and limited to the need for the requested testing accommodations."**⁴

In the past, the accommodations request process was complicated and lengthy, and requests were routinely rejected by the College Board and ACT, Inc, as lacking sufficient documentation. In 2016, following years of parental complaints and a federal investigation, both testing agencies revised their accommodations request processes.⁵ These days, the College Board and ACT, Inc make fewer decisions about individual accommodations requests, instead relying on the students' schools to communicate what accommodations are appropriate.



Generally speaking, if a student has and uses an accommodations plan at their school, they will receive those accommodations on the SAT or ACT once the school makes the request on their behalf.

²For more details on each law and what it covers, we recommend the helpful legal primers available at Understood.org.

³"ADA Requirements." Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2019. ⁴"ADA Requirements." Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2019.

⁵ACT, Inc, 2016; College Board, 2017

Formal accommodations plans in public schools

Schools that receive federal funding of any kind are required to provide resources and support for students with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that schools ensure that every student has equal access to educational opportunities.⁶

Schools can meet this requirement by creating and implementing either **504 plans** or **Individualized Education Plans** for students, depending on what is appropriate for each student's needs.

- 504 plans are appropriate for students who will remain in the general educational environment with certain accommodations. If a student has a 504 plan in place at school, they may receive accommodations like preferential seating, extended time on tests, or unrestricted bathroom breaks. A 504 plan can also apply to students who need accommodations on a temporary basis for long-term illness or injury. Generally speaking, a 504 plan does not address the underlying causes or diagnoses; its focus is on *how* the student will access education, not *why* the student may need accommodations in the first place. 504 plans must be periodically revisited and altered (if needed) based on the student's overall educational progress.
- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are appropriate for students whose needs are better met through some or all specialized instruction.⁷ IEPs were created as a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and have very strict requirements. They are comprehensive educational plans which outline specific goals to be met by the student during a given period, such as reading on grade level or mastery of phonics. Students who are in special education services or who receive speech or physical therapy through their school have IEPs. An IEP may contain information regarding a student's diagnoses or underlying conditions. IEPs are written and implemented by a team of teachers and specialists, and this team meets with the student's parent(s) regularly to discuss the student's progress towards meeting their goals.

Accommodations in private schools

Private schools that receive any federal funding have to follow certain parts of Section 504; otherwise, private schools are not bound by the federal regulations regarding students with disabilities, including IDEA. That doesn't mean that private schools don't accommodate their students; it just means that the services they provide—and the way they document these services—need not fit the exact requirements of a 504 plan or IEP.⁸ **Parents of students who attend private schools need to make sure that any accommodations their student receives are documented and reviewed regularly.** When it comes to requesting accommodations on the SAT and ACT, the more formal and well-documented the plan, the better.

Non-disclosure of accommodations

The terms of the ADA prohibit testing agencies from indicating a student's accommodations on their test scores. If a testing agency is found to have "flagged" a student's scores because they received any accommodations, that agency can be subject to legal action. Until 2018, the ACT featured a pre-test survey in which students could self-report their disability status, and that information was sold to colleges. While the practice did not involve actually flagging any tests that had been taken with accommodations, it still led to considerable concerns about student privacy. After a group of students filed a lawsuit against ACT, Inc., the testing agency stopped featuring questions about student disabilities on the survey.⁹

⁶Dept. of Labor, 2019. ⁷Dept. of Education, 2019. ⁸"Educational Rights: Public vs. Private Schools." Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), 2019. ⁹Scott Jaschik. "ACT Ends Practice Some Said Hurt Students With Disabilities." *Inside Higher Ed*, October 8, 2018.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Here's a big picture overview of the process.

ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

- Do I have a professionally diagnosed and documented disability?
- Does the disability affect my performance on standardized tests?
- Do I currently receive and use accommodations through a formal plan at school?

If you answered YES to all 3 of these questions, you are likely to have a strong case for accommodations on the SAT and ACT.



DOCUMENTATION 101

A strong request for accommodations will have documentation to support it. The documentation often required falls into three broad categories.

- 1 Records of current **in-school test accommodations** (i.e., an IEP, 504 plan, or other formal school plan)—often this information is enough to win approval.
- 2 A **formal diagnosis** from a qualified professional (e.g., a complete psychoeducational evaluation from a licensed clinical psychologist)—this is always required in the background and the test companies sometimes request a copy.
- 3 **Other documents** that tell your story (e.g., letters from teachers or tutors, report cards, or progress reports)



SAT: Accommodations granted for a student's first College Board test (PSAT, SAT, or AP) generally will apply to all subsequent tests.

ACT: Accommodations that were approved for an initial test date are generally renewed for subsequent test dates, but students need to reapply each time.

SAT KEY STEPS

Pre-Planning: Start as early as possible (freshman year)

- 1 Communicate with your school to get paperwork in place
- 2 Determine if updated testing or a formal school accommodations plan is needed
- 3 If ready, go ahead and submit a request; your accommodations will last throughout high school

Submitting a Request: Submit a request no later than 4 months (not counting summer months) before the exam

- 1 Your request must be complete (including any additional documentation) **by the accommodations request deadline** (typically 7 to 8 weeks before the exam) for you to receive a decision on time for the exam.
- 2 Review takes up to **7 weeks** but the clock starts over if you need to appeal or submit more information, so build in extra time.

ACT KEY STEPS

Pre-Planning: Start as early as possible (freshman year)

- 1 Communicate with your school to get paperwork in place
- 2 Determine if updated testing or a formal school accommodations plan is needed
- 3 Consider submitting a request for the PreACT if your school offers it

Submitting a Request: Submit a request no later than the registration deadline for the test (roughly 4–5 weeks before the test)

- 1 We recommend that you build in an extra few weeks to allow for appeals or other delays.
- 2 Review typically takes between **7 and 14 days**

Applying for Accommodations

How do I know if my student should apply for accommodations?

Generally speaking, if your student has documented accommodations **and** uses them for tests in school, then your student has a good chance of being granted accommodations on the SAT, PSAT, AP exams, and ACT.

If your student has a documented learning difference (LD) but does **not** currently have accommodations in school, then you will have a much harder time proving that your student needs those accommodations on the SAT or ACT. You can still apply for accommodations using the process detailed in this guide; however, your school's accommodations coordinator will need you to supply diagnostic records or psychoeducational testing results in order to complete the request.

What kind of documentation will I need to provide?

If your student has an IEP or 504 plan in place at their school, then you know how important documentation is! The good news is that—in many cases—the school already has the necessary documentation on file and can submit it to the testing agency without requiring you to re-submit. However, it's a good idea to have easy access to your own copies of the following:

- 1) Records of current accommodations for in-school assessments (e.g., an Individualized Education Plan (IEP, 504 Plan, or other formal school plan)
- 2) A formal diagnosis from a qualified professional (e.g., a complete psychoeducational evaluation from a licensed clinical psychologist)
- 3) Other documents that tell your story (e.g., letters from teachers or tutors, report cards, or progress reports that document the positive impact that the proposed accommodations have on student performance)

For homeschooled students, the burden of documentation falls more heavily on their parents; for more information, see page 22.

What kind of accommodations are available?

While many people immediately think of extended time when they think of standardized testing accommodations, there are a variety of accommodations designed to suit the particular needs of students with a host of different disabilities, as well as students who need English Learner supports. The College Board and ACT, Inc list some typical accommodations on their websites, including extended time, preferential seating, and large-print booklets; however, both agencies state that their lists do not encompass any and all possible accommodations.

For College Board tests and the ACT, you'll be working with a counselor at your student's school who is trained in the accommodations process and can help you understand what accommodations would be best for your student.

College Board Testing Accommodations

If your student needs accommodations on the SAT, PSAT, SAT Subject Tests, or AP Exams, you must apply for them through the College Board's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Generally speaking, you'll be working with your school's SSD Coordinator—a counselor or testing coordinator who has been trained in SSD's online portal—to submit your request.¹⁰ If you don't know who that person is, you should reach out to your student's guidance office, and they can provide you with that information.

The College Board's accommodations process isn't tied to a particular test type or test date, which means that you can (and should!) begin the process before registering for a specific test date. In addition, College Board accommodations stay in place for any College Board test.¹¹ For example, a student who is approved for accommodations on the PSAT will also have those accommodations on any AP exam, SAT, or SAT Subject Test they may take during their high school career.

This section will explain every step of the accommodations request process, including a suggested timeline. Generally speaking, it's better to start early with the accommodations request process for College Board tests (freshman year, if possible).

SSD Online: The College Board Accommodations Management System

The College Board's Services for Students with Disabilities office (SSD) receives, reviews, and responds to accommodations requests. SSD works directly with schools through SSD Online, an accommodations management system that allows schools to submit requests, upload required documentation, and review an application's status.

SSD Online is only available to schools, and the College Board strongly encourages students to work with their schools' SSD Coordinators to submit requests.

Who is Eligible for College Board Accommodations?

SSD looks at four key things to determine whether your student should receive the accommodations you are requesting for them:

1 Does the student have a documented disability?

Documentation requirements will vary depending on your student's disability and the accommodations you are requesting. Typical examples of appropriate documentation include a current psychoeducational evaluation (in the case of a learning disability) or a doctor's report (in the case of a physical or medical impairment).¹² If your student receives accommodations in school, the school should have the required documentation already; however, you should verify that your student's school has the most up-to-date documentation in order to help this process.

¹⁰Homeschooled or non-enrolled students have a different accommodations request process. *See page 22 for more information.*

¹¹College Board accommodations expire a year after the student completes high school. In addition, temporary accommodations (for injuries or illness) have specified expiration dates. ¹²Typically, students without a diagnosed disability are not eligible for accommodations. Students who have short-term injuries and conditions that may affect their ability to take standardized tests must follow a separate protocol. The College Board website offers more information on its Temporary Medical Conditions page.

2 Does the disability impact the student's ability to participate in College Board exams?

In order for the student to apply for accommodations on standardized tests, the disability need to impact their participation on College Board exams. Different disabilities result in different limitations on daily functioning. Some functional limitations may affect standardized testing, while others may not. For example, if a student's disability limits his ability to read, write, or sit for extended periods of time, he may need accommodations on College Board exams. A student who needs assistance participating in physical education may not need accommodations from the College Board.

3 Does the student need the requested accommodation?

The student must show that they need the specific accommodation requested. For example, to show that extended time is needed, your student should have documentation to show difficulty on timed tests.

4 Does the student receive the requested accommodation on school tests?

The answer to this question is critical, and the College Board expects the answer to be "yes." Students who do not have a history of receiving the requested accommodation on school tests will have a harder time making their case with the College Board. On the other hand, students who have an IEP, 504 plan, or other formal school plan are likely to receive approval for their request without having to submit any further documentation. (See Step 2.) The College Board prefers to see school accommodations in place for four months at the **very least**.

"My daughter has Dyslexia and ADHD. I hired one of Applerouth's math tutors because she was struggling with AP calculus. She was able to secure a major academic scholarship and was admitted into the emerging scholars honors program for STEM students with learning challenges. She is excited about math again."

—Parent, Atlanta Metropolitan Area



STEP BY STEP

How to Request Accommodations on College Board Exams

If your student has a diagnosed learning disability or other disability that affects standardized testing, it is almost never too early to start the process; you should consider beginning freshman year, if possible. Many students' first College Board exam is the PSAT 10 in October of sophomore year. Students who plan to take the PSAT 10 with accommodations will need to begin the process by spring of freshman year to allow time for summer break.

The accommodations remain in place until one year after high school graduation, and you don't need to reapply each time your student takes a College Board exam.

1 You Contact Your School and Sign the Consent Form



Timing: As early as possible but no later than 4 to 5 months before your student's first College Board exam (not counting summer months).

Most families work with their school to submit a request through SSD Online. Many schools have an SSD Coordinator (often a college counselor or learning specialist) who knows how to access and use SSD Online. If you're not sure who this person is, contact the school's guidance office to find out. It's a good idea to reach out to the SSD Coordinator early and let them know your student needs to test with accommodations (and what accommodations your student needs).

Next, you'll need to download and print the Consent Form for Accommodations Request, located on the College Board's Accommodations website.¹³ Don't send this form back to the College Board; instead, sign it and deliver it to your SSD Coordinator. This step is crucial because **without a signed Consent Form, the SSD Coordinator will not be able to submit the request.**

2 The SSD Coordinator Submits Your Request Through SSD Online



Timing: As early as possible but no later than 4 months (not counting summer months) before your student's first College Board exam.

Consent Form in hand, your student's SSD Coordinator can submit the request for accommodations through SSD Online. The SSD Coordinator will have to enter information about your student's disability, the requested accommodations, and the formal accommodations plan in place at school.

The College Board advises that the SSD Coordinator gather all supporting paperwork (e.g., formal documentation of the disability) and have that information ready when he or she submits the accommodations request. Additional documentation may not be necessary, but it's a good idea to have the information ready just in case.

¹³<https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/pdf/ssd-consent-form-accommodations.pdf> ¹⁴FAQs—College Board Accommodations Requests: <https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/tips-faqs/faq>. The College Board also emphasizes that students who receive accommodations at school must first request accommodations and receive approval through SSD before using accommodations on a College Board exam. **The College Board will cancel scores for students who use accommodations that it did not pre-approve.** ¹⁵The deadline to submit a request for accommodations typically falls 7 to 8 weeks before the College Board Exam date. The exact deadlines vary and are listed on the College Board's website at: <https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/calendar>. ¹⁶View the College Board's Disability Documentation Guidelines at: <https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/documentation-guidelines/disability-documentation> and Accommodation Documentation Guidelines at <https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/documentation-guidelines/accommodations-documentation>. ¹⁷<https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/documentation-guidelines/learning-disorders>, and <https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/documentation-guidelines/adhd>.

3 SSD Determines Whether Additional Documentation is Required

Starting in 2017, the College Board streamlined its review process to meet federal disability law standards. The College Board now asks two key questions:

- 1) **Is the student requesting the same accommodations that are in his/her current IEP, 504 plan, or other formal school-based plan?**
- 2) **Is the student using the requested accommodations for school testing?**

If the answer to both questions is “yes,” then the College Board will likely grant **automatic approval** without requiring any additional information.

Most students who receive accommodations at school and request them from the College Board are approved.¹⁴

In some cases, however, the College Board will require additional information. Once the school has submitted the initial request, the College Board will send a message to the SSD Coordinator through SSD Online stating whether additional documentation is required.

4 The SSD Coordinator Submits Additional Documentation (if Required) through SSD Online



Timing: As early as possible but no later than the accommodations request deadline for your official exam (roughly 7 to 8 weeks before the exam).¹⁵

If the College Board requires additional support for your accommodations request, you’ll need to work with your SSD Coordinator to make sure the school has all the needed paperwork (like a current psycho-educational evaluation or doctor’s report). Ideally, you should work with the SSD Coordinator before they submit your request (Step 2) to ensure that supporting documents are in order.

The College Board’s criteria for appropriate documentation vary depending on the disability and requested accommodations.¹⁶ The SSD Coordinator should check the documentation to make sure it meets the relevant College Board criteria.

While the requirements will depend on your student’s disability and the requested accommodations, any additional documentation should provide evidence of:

- **Your student’s disability**
- **The degree to which this disability affects your student’s activities (the “functional limitation”)**
- **The need for the specific accommodation(s) requested**

The College Boards considers psychological testing completed within the last 5 years to be current.¹⁷

If you do not have the specific documents that the College Boards requests, you may submit other evidence. Your accommodations approval could get delayed if the documents you submit do not provide the information that the College Board needs.

Once the documents are ready, the SSD Coordinator submits them via SSD Online or fax (using a special cover sheet from the College Board). The College Board will not treat your request for accommodations as complete until the SSD Coordinator submits the additional documentation.

While you can technically wait until the deadline to submit a complete accommodations request and supporting documents, we recommend starting much earlier, if possible. If the College Board denies your request, you’ll need to submit new documentation and wait for a second round of review. Gathering new information may prove time-consuming, and the SSD can take up to seven weeks to review the new information. The earlier you start, the greater your chances of receiving a final accommodations decision before test day.



The College Board must receive the supporting documents by the accommodations request deadline for you to receive a decision on time for the exam.

5 SSD Reviews the Completed Request

SSD staff will review the request and any supporting documentation. In some cases, SSD will ask a panel of external experts (e.g., psychologists, doctors, vision specialists) to review the request as well. The College Board advises students to allow **seven weeks** for the review. If you need to provide more documentation, the review can take seven more weeks.

Your SSD Coordinator can view the status of your request at any time on SSD Online.

If your student plans to take the SAT, you do not need to wait for an accommodations decision to register for the official test. However, if your student is approved for accommodations that your assigned test center cannot offer—like computer access, small group testing, or large print fonts—you may be required to change test centers after receiving the decision.

6 SSD Sends Its Decision

Once SSD makes a decision about the accommodations request, they will notify you and your SSD Coordinator. The SSD Coordinator will receive an email notification and can view the decision letter on SSD Online. The SSD Coordinator can relay the information to you, and you will also receive direct communication from the College Board regarding the request.

You should expect to hear directly from the College Board in one of several ways:

- **Online** (if your student has a College Board My Organizer account and is registered for an official test)
- **Via email** (if your email address is listed on your student's My Organizer account)
- **Via regular mail** (if your email is not listed on your student's My Organizer account)

If SSD decides to grant accommodations, the decision letter will include an eligibility letter, which includes:

- Details about the accommodations your student will receive
- Your student's eligibility code, which you will use to register your student for a test if you have not done so already. You'll also need the code for any future registrations.

You should receive the decision no later than seven weeks after you submitted a complete request for accommodations with supporting documentation. Keep in touch with your SSD Coordinator throughout the process to stay informed about the status of your request.

7 Appeal The Decision If Needed

If you did not receive the accommodations you requested, your Decision Letter will explain why. *For information about appealing a decision, please see page 21.*

8 Getting Organized for Test Day

Congratulations! You've successfully navigated the accommodations process and received approval from the College Board. Don't forget the following housekeeping steps to make sure your student can use the accommodations on test day.

• SAT and SAT Subject Tests:

- ✓ Use your student's SSD Eligibility Code when you register.
- ✓ Check your student's admission ticket before the test. If the accommodations are not listed on the ticket, contact SSD.
- ✓ If you received accommodations approval after registering, check to make sure that your student's SAT admission ticket has been updated, and contact SSD if not.

• **AP Exams, PSAT, and PSAT 10:** tell your school counselor or SSD Coordinator that you plan to use accommodations so they can make arrangements in advance.

• **If you just received approval right before an official test and you've already registered your student, contact the College Board to see if your student can use the accommodations on that test.**

• Make sure your student brings their Eligibility Letter to every College Board exam

For certain accommodations that are not available at a test center (e.g., 100% extended time or multi-day testing) your SSD Coordinator will work with you and your student to schedule a school-based SAT. The school-based SAT must take place during a specific window from the day of the national test date until four days later (Saturday through Tuesday). The College Board website provides more details about school-based testing and the exact rules for how to administer and schedule such tests.¹⁸

9 Make Changes if Needed

It's possible, especially if you started early, that you'll need to make changes to your student's accommodations after approval. You should notify your school's SSD Coordinator as soon as you know a change is needed. Your SSD Coordinator can request the change for you through SSD Online. You'll need to request and receive approval in advance for any changes that you hope to have in place for your next test.

If your student transfers schools after the College Board approves your accommodations, tell the counselor at your student's new school about your accommodations. The SSD Coordinator at your new school will be able to transfer your accommodations very simply through the online system.



Students must bring their Eligibility Letter with them to every College Board exam.

¹⁸<https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/exam-administration/administrating-sat-accommodations>.

ACT Accommodations

ACT, Inc manages its accommodations requests online through its Test Accommodations and Accessibility System (TAA). Every school has a TAA Testing Coordinator who can submit accommodations requests through TAA, and larger schools may have multiple professionals who can submit requests.¹⁹

The ACT accommodations process is tied to a specific testing date, and you can't start the official request process until you've registered your student to take the ACT on that date. The process starts over for every subsequent ACT administration, so you will have to re-apply for accommodations if your student plans to take the test multiple times.

This section will explain every step of the ACT accommodations request process, including a suggested timeline.

STEP BY STEP

How to Request Accommodations on the ACT

1 Register for an ACT Test Date



Timing: As early as possible but no later than 2 to 3 weeks before the test registration deadline.

Unlike the College Board, which allows families to apply for accommodations without registering for a test, the ACT requires families to register for a specific test date to initiate the accommodations request process. However, the registration fee may be refunded if the TAA does not approve requested accommodations for a given test date.

To get started, you must create or log into your ACT web account. From there, you can register your student for their selected test date. When you register, you'll have an opportunity to indicate that your student requires accommodations and select the type of accommodation they need.

You'll have a choice between National or Special Accommodations. Select National if the accommodations your student requires can be provided at a test center. Select Special if your student require accommodations that cannot be provided at a test center.

• National Testing Accommodations (examples)

- ✓ 50% extended time
- ✓ Wheelchair accessible room
- ✓ Large type test booklet
- ✓ Seating near the front
- ✓ Spoken instructions
- ✓ Assistance marking responses in the test booklet

• Special Testing Accommodations (examples)

- ✓ More than 50% extended time
- ✓ Testing over multiple days
- ✓ Alternate test formats (braille, audio, or a reader)
- ✓ Use of a scribe or computer on the writing test or extended time on the writing test only

¹⁹Homeschooled or non-enrolled students have a different accommodations request process, which will also be covered in this section.

2 Connect with Your School and Sign the ACT Consent Form

After you register your student and note their need for accommodations, the ACT will email instructions on how to work with your student's school to submit a request through the TAA. You will also receive a Consent to Release Information form. Forward the information to your school's Test Coordinator—along with your signed Consent to Release Information form—as soon as possible. **The accommodations process can't begin until the Test Coordinator receives both pieces of information.**

If you did not indicate the need for accommodations when you registered your student for the test, or did not receive the instruction email from the ACT, you can instead provide your ACT ID number (available on your ACT web account) and test date to your school's Test Coordinator. The Test Coordinator can use that information to start the process in TAA.

Although the ACT provides a standard post-registration email to start the process with your school, we recommend that you start the conversation with your school much earlier. By the time you register for your first ACT and ask the school to submit your accommodations request, you'll want to ensure that your documentation is already in place.

3 Your School Submits Your Request to the ACT via TAA



Timing: As early as possible but no later than the registration deadline for your test (roughly three weeks before the test). Add another few weeks to allow for appeals or other delays.

Your school's Test Coordinator will submit the accommodations request via TAA. The request will include the requested accommodation, the reason for the request, details about your student's IEP, 504 plan, or other formal school accommodations plan, and supporting documentation.

The ACT will ask whether your student has previously received accommodations in school or on other standardized tests due to their disability. To address this, the Test Coordinator must submit information about your student's past accommodations or explain why your student has not received accommodations before.

- **If your student *has* received school accommodations:** The school must submit the special education *has* service or accommodations pages from your student's current IEP, 504 plan, or official school accommodations plan. The ACT prefers to see accommodations plans that have been in place for **one year or more**.
- **If your student *has not* received school accommodations:** The school must submit a detailed explanation of why your student did not use accommodations in the past but needs them now.

The ACT may also require complete diagnostic documentation. The ACT typically requires this additional paperwork in cases where the student's diagnosis is recent or where the student has only recently begun to receive accommodations.

The ACT's Policy for Accommodations Documentation lists the specific information required to substantiate various disabilities and conditions, including learning disabilities, ADHD, autism, and traumatic brain injury, among others. If the ACT requires you to submit diagnostic documents, we recommend that you review the required information for your student's specific disability, available on the ACT's website.²⁰

You can also choose to further support your request with letters from teachers explaining how the disability affects your student in class and on tests. The ACT has a Teacher Survey Form, which teachers can complete instead of writing a letter.²¹ Teacher observation forms cannot replace the required diagnostic documents, but they can help tell the story surrounding the diagnosis.

²⁰www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/accommodations/policy-for-accommodations-documentation/criteria-for-diagnostic-documentation.html ²¹Available at www.act.org/aap/pdf/TeacherSurveyForm.pdf

4 The ACT Reviews Your Request

The ACT will review your request and any supporting documentation. The ACT review process is much faster than the College Board's, and typically takes **7 to 14 business days**.

5 The ACT Sends a Decision Notification to Your School

The ACT will email your school's Test Coordinator when the Decision Notification is available on the TAA. The ACT will not contact you directly about the decision, so you will need to rely on your school's Test Coordinator. Many students in your student's school may have pending accommodations requests, so we recommend that you check in with your Test Coordinator around the time a decision is due back (around two weeks after submission) to help ensure you receive the information quickly.

The Decision Notification will list the accommodations the ACT approved and those that it denied, with reasons for the denials. If you have any questions about the decision, you can contact the ACT.

If the ACT denied your request, you can appeal the decision. See *page 21 for information on Appeals*.

6 Submit a Request for Reconsideration If Needed



Timing: As early as possible, but no later than the registration deadline for the test (roughly three weeks before the test).

If the initial request is denied, families can work with the school to have the ACT reconsider the accommodations request. Like the College Board, the ACT expects families to submit new information with the request for reconsideration. If the student has already submitted full diagnostic documents, this might be a good time to add letters or forms from teachers.

7 Get Organized for Test Day

Congratulations! The ACT has approved your accommodations request. Now it's time to get organized for test day. Make sure the following is in place after you receive your Decision Notification.

For National Testing

- If your student's only accommodation is extended time, the accommodation should be listed on their admission ticket, and the ACT will notify their test center.
- If your student gets other accommodations, ACT staff will check to see if the accommodations are available at your student's chosen test center. If they are not, ACT staff will find your student another test center (typically the one you listed as second choice). Once the ACT finds a suitable test center, you and the test center coordinator will both receive a letter confirming:
 - ✓ Your student's name
 - ✓ Their reporting time and location
 - ✓ The accommodations they will receive on test day

For special testing accommodations, you will have to work with your student's school to schedule the exam during the special testing window for your test date.²² The two-week window typically begins on the national test date for which you registered your student.

²²A calendar of special testing windows is available on the ACT website.

8 Apply Your Accommodations to Future Test Dates

Remember Step 1, where you started by registering for a single test date? If your student chooses to take the ACT again, you will have to work through TAA again to secure accommodations for future test dates; however, the process is much easier once the ACT has approved the initial request.

For some accommodations—particularly special testing accommodations that require a different testing date or location—you may be directed to work with your Testing Coordinator after registration.

For National Testing accommodations, you may simply need to wait for a formal decision from the ACT to renew accommodations from a previous administration. Either way, you start the process the same way: by registering for a test date and indicating that your student needs accommodations.

“My client’s son has high functioning autism, and his tutor worked very well with him. His parents are very pleased with the way she has responded to his differences and needs as she preps him for the ACT.”

**—Independent Educational Consultant,
Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area**



Accommodations on Test Day

Start planning early—and keep the letter!

If your student has accommodations that require school-based testing (like multiple day testing for the ACT), you will need to coordinate plans with your school well in advance of the targeted test date. Even if your student has accommodations that can be served on a regular test day and location, you should make sure you understand the granted accommodations so that you can advocate for your child on test day if needed. You and your student must read the letter that describes the accommodations they have been granted carefully and well in advance. Do not assume that your student received the accommodations exactly as they were requested! **Students are required to bring a copy of the accommodations letter with them on test day, and it is their responsibility to ensure that the accommodations they receive on test day are the same ones detailed in the letter.** Students who fail to do so run the risk of having their scores cancelled or being denied accommodations on a future test date.

Arrive early to ensure accommodations are in place

If your student is taking the test with accommodations, you should make sure that they arrive at the testing site early to ensure that they get their accommodations administered correctly. The list of potential accommodations is long, and each testing agency—and test center—can apply those accommodations in a slightly different way, so be sure to read the fine print and be ready to advocate to get the testing situation for which your student is eligible. When you arrive at the test center, check in with the Test Coordinator rather than just following posted signs or the instructions of individual proctors. Most students with extended time will be grouped in a room with other students who have the same accommodation, and students with accommodations that allow for adaptive technologies will be tested in a different room, so you want to be sure that you are comfortably settled in the right place before the test begins. If your student has multi-day testing, they may be testing in a very small group (or even individually), so it's important to check in with the Testing Coordinator early.

Plan to stay as long as necessary

Students with accommodations may wind up starting the test a little bit later than those on standard time and invariably need to stay as long as the test requires, so plan for a long day (your student should definitely bring a water bottle and snacks). Parents and guardians must recognize that students are not allowed to access any communication devices during the testing period at all, so they will not be able to contact you until the test is complete. Attempting to contact them before the test is complete could put their results in jeopardy.

The Accommodations Appeal Process

Sometimes, the College Board and ACT, Inc deny requests for accommodations. Here are some common reasons they might do so:

- The **supporting documentation is either incomplete or doesn't support** the requested accommodations
- The **student hasn't been using accommodations in school or hasn't been using them long enough** to meet the testing agency's standards
- The testing agency **approved some, but not all, requested accommodations**

If ACT, Inc or the College Board deny your request for accommodations, you can appeal the decision.

The importance of additional documentation

In our experience, appeals that do not feature new evidence are unlikely to succeed. It's not enough to submit the same documentation and request different accommodations; **you've got to have new evidence for the testing agencies to consider**. This evidence can take a variety of forms, including past report cards and progress reports. Teachers, tutors, or other professionals who have worked with your student can also provide letters that explain any informal accommodations your student has received.

Appealing a decision for a College Board test

Your student's Decision Letter will explain any accommodations granted, along with any denied and the reason for the denial. For more information, you can email SSD at ssd@info.collegeboard.org.

You should work with your student's SSD Coordinator to gather more evidence to bolster the appeal. After your student's SSD Coordinator has submitted the appeal, the College Board's SSD team will review the appeal. It can take up to seven weeks; that's just one more reason to get started with the accommodations process as soon as possible for College Board tests. If your student is scheduled to take a College Board test before SSD returns its decision, they will have to test without the requested accommodations.

Appealing a decision for an ACT

The ACT, Inc appeals process is very similar to the College Board appeals process, with one significant difference: the timeline. Because you can't request accommodations until you register for a specific test date, you don't have a lot of time between receiving the accommodations decision and the test itself.

ACT, Inc sends out a Decision Notification to the TAA Coordinator, who will share it with you. If you choose to appeal the decision, the TAA Coordinator will work with you to gather additional documentation and submit the appeal on your student's behalf.

ACT, Inc must receive the full accommodations appeal by the published late registration deadline for the test date in question. It can take several weeks to receive an appeals decision, and the decision may not be ready in time for the scheduled test date. If your student wins their appeal after the test date has passed, then the accommodations will go into effect for their next scheduled test date.

The Accommodations Process for Homeschooled Students

College Board Tests

If your student is homeschooled or you wish to work without support from your student's school, you can still apply for accommodations on College Board tests; however, you will not have access to SSD online. You'll start by printing and filling out the Student Eligibility Form, located on the SAT's SSD homepage.²³ The form asks for a range of information, including:

- **Name and speciality of diagnosing professional**
- **Date and type of any diagnoses**
- **Date and type of any standardized testing to determine disability**

The paper form process can take longer, especially if you have to appeal the decision. The College Board website offers helpful tips for families who plan to submit a request without an SSD Coordinator.²⁴

ACT

The ACT's online accommodations application platform, TAA, is only available to schools, so if your student is homeschooled or not currently enrolled, you will have to fill out a paper application for accommodations. You'll register for a test date online and indicate that your student needs accommodations and is either homeschooled or not currently enrolled. The ACT's online registration system will send you an application to print. You'll need to fill out the application and email, fax, or mail it back to the ACT, along with the following documentation:

- **Diagnostic information**
- **A completed Exceptions Statement** (available for download from the ACT's website)²⁵
- **Evidence to substantiate the need for accommodations**, such as prior IEPs or 504 plans, recommendations from your student's diagnosing professional, or a personal statement indicating the need for the requested accommodations.

You'll need to send all of this information to the ACT by the late registration deadline of the test your student hopes to take. For more information, visit the ACT's website.

²³<https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/pdf/2019-sat-ssd-eligibility-form.pdf>

²⁴<https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/request-accommodations/submitted-requests-without-your-school>

²⁵<https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ExceptionsStatementFormandChecklist.pdf>

Resources for Educators and Parents

It's important for parents, students, and educators alike to be as informed as possible, and we hope our Guide has helped on that journey. Here are some additional resources on the accommodations process and learning differences.



College Board and ACT, Inc. Accommodations Websites

Both testing entities provide information on their websites about the accommodations process.

- **College Board Services for Students with Disabilities:**
<https://accommodations.collegeboard.org/>
- **ACT Accommodations**
 - ✓ For U.S Students:
<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/accommodations.html>
 - ✓ For International Students:
<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act-non-us/registration/accommodations.html>

Websites About Learning Differences and Related Topics

- **Understood (understood.org):** a one-stop site for everything from articles and webinars to infographics and practical tips on a wide range of learning and attention differences
- **National Center for Learning Disabilities (nclld.org):** of particular interest for those interested in law and policy related to LDs; contains detailed reports and studies
- **LD OnLine:** an educational service of a PBS station in Washington, D.C.; offers articles, expert posts, a resource guide, and service referral lists, among other helpful tools
- **ADDitude (additudemag.com):** an online magazine with articles and other free resources on all things pertaining to ADHD
- **Made by Dyslexia (madebydyslexia.org):** an organization that aims to help the world understand, support, and value dyslexia; contains links to reports and videos
- **International Dyslexia Association (dyslexiaida.org):** dyslexia awareness and advocacy organization offering extensive free information; links to state IDA chapters available
- **Child Mind Institute (childmind.org):** articles and other informational resources related to child mental health and learning differences

Podcasts

- **Tilt Parenting Podcast:** parent Debbie Reber hosts a wide range of experts and providers on topics of interest to families raising exceptional children
- **Bright Now:** a podcast about parenting and educating bright and curious kids from the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, with episodes on twice-exceptional students
- **Mind Matters Podcast:** discussions with professionals in psychology, education, and related fields; focuses on gifted/talented and twice-exceptional children and adults

Books

- ***Thinking Differently: An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities*** by David Flink
- ***Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder*** by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and John J. Ratey, M.D.
- ***Overcoming Dyslexia*** by Sally Shaywitz, M.D.
- ***The Dyslexic Advantage*** by Brock L. Eide, M.D., M.A and Fernette F. Eide, M.D.
- ***The Autistic Brain: Helping Different Kinds of Minds Succeed*** by Temple Grandin and Richard Panek
- ***Twice-Exceptional*** by Scott Barry Kaufman, PhD (editor).
- ***Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students: Helping Kids Cope with Explosive Feelings*** by Christine Fonseca
- ***The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Parenting and Understanding Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children*** by Ross W. Green, PhD
- ***Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Practical Strategies to Overcome Fears, Worries, and Phobias and Be Prepared for Life—from Toddlers to Teens*** by Tamar Chansky, PhD



Stay informed on
all things testing by
visiting our blog:
applerouth.com/experts

Feel free to reach out to us at 866-789-PREP (7737) or info@applerouth.com.



In Person Prep Options

Atlanta

404-728-0661

2108 Briarcliff Road NE
3rd Floor
Atlanta, GA 30329

Bethany Bend

13680 GA-9 N
Suite G-600
Alpharetta, GA 30004

Holcomb Bridge Office

626 Holcomb Bridge Road #100
Roswell, GA 30076

Vinings Jubilee

4300 Paces Ferry Road Southeast #245
Atlanta, GA 30339

Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

202-558-5644

4750 Wisconsin Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20016

Reston

12310 Pinecrest Rd #305
Reston, VA 20191

Chicago

847-239-5247

Houston

281-946-7128

New York Tri-State Area

212-731-4676

Seattle

206-456-6864

Online | International

866-789-PREP (7737)

