

Class Accommodations: Tips for Talking with Professors

Disability Services prepares Accommodation Letters (AL) each semester. Students using academic accommodations will deliver these letters to their instructors, as we emphasize student responsibility in initiating all accommodations. Here are some tips on how to practice your self-advocacy skills to obtain your accommodations:

Make an appointment to meet with your professors. Find a time during scheduled office hours, or by appointment, to meet privately with your instructor. Email your professor to arrange the meeting as soon as possible. In general, the time immediately following class is usually not a good time to talk. This is often when everybody with a question bombards the professor. Most importantly, the environment does not provide the privacy to ensure confidentiality. It is better to make an appointment.

Start in your comfort zone. Start by approaching those professors you feel most comfortable around. As you gain confidence, set up appointments with the other professors.

Be prepared. Using your accommodations letter as a guide, think about any information you may want to discuss. When you arrive at your scheduled meeting time, have your AL with you, and be ready to review the classroom and testing accommodations you plan to use for the class.

Understand the effect of your disability. Focus the discussion on your accommodations, not your disability. You do not need to disclose your diagnosed disability to your professors to receive accommodations, but it is helpful for them to know how it affects you in the classroom. Do you have trouble concentrating? Is it hard to follow the professor while taking notes? Can you see information presented in class? If professors have this information, they may have a better idea of how to appropriately accommodate your disability.

Be polite. If you are rude or demanding, both you and the professor may get defensive and the conversation becomes unproductive – it turns into a “battle of wills.” You can still receive help or accommodations to which you are entitled without demanding them.

Know your rights. When meeting with the professor to discuss accommodations, if necessary, remind him or her that you are entitled to receive academic accommodations through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Problems. If you have a problem with a professor or have a problem receiving any accommodation, contact your campus Disability Support Specialist for assistance. Ultimately, we want you to be your own advocate, but we are here to help you in that process.

Sample Fill-in-the-Blank Student Email to Professors regarding Accommodations:

Dear Professor _____,

My name is _____. I am registered for your _____ (course prefix & #) class, _____ (CRN #) class, scheduled to meet on _____ (days & times).

I have been approved to receive accommodations by Disability Services this semester. I would like to schedule a date & time to meet with you, to share my Faculty Accommodation Letter and to discuss the accommodations I will be using for your class.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

Sample:

Dear Professor Smith,

My name is John Doe, and I am registered for your MATH 0001 class, CRN # 12345, scheduled to meet on MW 8:30am – 9:45am.

I have been approved to receive accommodations by Disability Services this semester. I would like to schedule a date & time to meet with you, to share my Faculty Accommodation Letter, obtain your signature on it, and discuss the accommodations I will be using for your class.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

John Doe