
Techniques for Accommodating Learning Disabilities

DELIVERY

Distribute handouts in advance of the presentation.

Make instructor notes available upon request.

Use effective public speaking techniques (clear pronunciation, appropriate volume, inflection and speed).

Avoid slang, innuendoes, puns, acronyms and other words that may cause confusion.

Do not ask participants to take notes when the room is darkened.

When multimedia is used, provide a script, as well as a description of the visuals.

Permit participants to record your presentation.

Never select someone from the participant audience to read aloud.

In no way communicate that learners will do better if they just “work harder.”

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Announce that participants should see you privately to work out testing arrangements.

Provide an atmosphere that is free of distraction and adequately lighted.

Allow participants to take a test home, if requested and possible.

Offer oral and written test formats.

Ask participants to demonstrate and explain, rather than take a written exam.

Allow participants to use calculators, when needed.

Allow participants as much time as needed to complete the assessment.

Use pass/fail method, whenever possible.

Review the participant’s completed test with him/her.

TECHNIQUES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF DISABILITIES

Learning Disability	Suggested Techniques
Visual Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provide large-print version of handouts.<input type="checkbox"/> Orient the person who is visually impaired to the environment (e.g., classroom and hotel).<input type="checkbox"/> Ask the participant where he/she prefers to sit.<input type="checkbox"/> Position the participant near an electrical outlet, if he/she uses a laptop to take notes.<input type="checkbox"/> Do not stand in front of a glass window or mirror.<input type="checkbox"/> When talking about a picture, describe its content.<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with the participant about how he/she will answer test questions (e.g., by taping or keyboarding responses).
Hearing Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the participant about the need for an interpreter and/or a note-taker.<input type="checkbox"/> Minimize lecture.<input type="checkbox"/> Ask the participant where he/she prefers to sit.<input type="checkbox"/> Ask the interpreter where he/she prefers to sit.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a copy of the instructor's notes and all other relevant materials, in advance, to the interpreter.<input type="checkbox"/> Spell out technical terms to the interpreter.<input type="checkbox"/> Concentrate on not speaking too fast or too loudly; speak at a normal speed and volume.<input type="checkbox"/> Repeat questions.<input type="checkbox"/> Inform participants when you are moving to a new topic.<input type="checkbox"/> Pause every 15 minutes to prevent interpreter fatigue.<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with the participant about how he/she will answer test questions (e.g., use interpreter, require more time).

TECHNIQUES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF DISABILITIES (con)

Learning Disability	Suggested Techniques
Mobility Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Find out whether the participant requires adaptive equipment on the job that should also be provided in a training environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a site survey to ensure that the training venue can accommodate the special needs of the participant. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the participant whether it would be helpful to have a note-taker. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer to provide a copy of the instructor's notes and all other relevant materials (in lieu of note-taking). <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with the participant about how he/she will answer test questions (e.g., respond orally, require more time).
Medical Impairments (Life-threatening or chronic diseases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be flexible about participant attendance; provide an opportunity to make up any missed training. <input type="checkbox"/> Alleviate concerns of other trainees who may be uncomfortable in a training environment with someone who is ill. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the training venue is comfortable. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a place for the participant to lie down during breaks. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with the participant about how he/she will answer test questions.

Additional Resources

Section 504	http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=15
Section 508	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm <input type="checkbox"/> http://section508.gov/
Designing and Delivering Training to Disabled Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ASTD Info-line entitled, "The Americans with Disabilities Act: Impact on Training" (Issue 9203) <input type="checkbox"/> ASTD Info-line entitled, "The Americans with Disabilities Act: Techniques for Accommodation" (Issue 9204)

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1. **Training Style Adjustments.** Some of the best practices for accommodating disabilities are also best practices for training in general.
 2. **Visual aids.** Make your visual aids and handouts large, clear, and readable.
 3. **Face your audience.** For some hearing impaired people, it will be useful to be able to see your face while you are speaking.
 4. **Vision impaired participants.** You are not responsible for having Braille versions of your materials or a sign-language interpreter. If a participant needs this type of aid, they are generally responsible for arranging it themselves.

You may not know that you have a participant with a disability until they show up, but be prepared to make adjustments if necessary, and *be flexible*. Don't be afraid to ask them what else they might need.
