

Communication in College

For students who want to continue their education

Types of Communication

- When you are in college, it is important to talk about your needs and rights.
- There are three general types of communication, **assertive**, **passive** and **aggressive**.

Assertive: Being confident, respectful, and open when you speak



Passive: Worried that speaking up for your needs could make the other person uncomfortable.



Aggressive: Demanding things and pushing your thoughts on a person in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.



Other Ways to Communicate

Nonverbal: The way you communicate with your body, such as eye contact or facial expressions.



Email: Ways to effectively communicate using email is to use a simple and professional email address, send email messages during business hours, and respond within 24 hours.



Communicating About Accommodations in College

- Use **assertive** communication to ask your school for accommodations or supports.
- Communicating with the **Office of Disability Services** about your disability will help you get supports and accommodations that you need.
- To get the **supports** and **accommodations** you need, you must advocate for yourself.
- When talking with professors about accommodations, schedule meetings during office hours.
- Communicate often with your professor so they can answer your questions and provide supports.

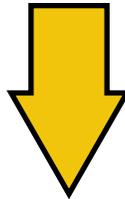




Wrap Up

- Use **assertive** communication when disclosing your disability or talking about the supports you need.
- Communicate with the **Office of Disability Services** if you need supports and accommodations.
- Communicate about **accommodations** with your professors.

KEEP READING FOR MORE DETAILS





Types of Communication

- When communicating about your needs and rights in college, using assertive communication is effective
- **Assertive:** Confident and able to speak openly in order to express needs and thoughts in a respectful way
 - Example: “I need and have been approved for extra time on my exams.”
- Using passive or aggressive communication may mean that you are unclear when communicating about your needs and rights, and could lead to miscommunications about the supports you need
- **Passive:** Afraid to express needs or thoughts because it may make the situation uncomfortable
 - Example: “I’ll take extra time for my test, but only if you are okay with me having it.”
- **Aggressive:** Forcing your thoughts and opinions on others and making demands in a disrespectful way
 - Example: “Give me more time. I need it, which means you have to.”

Communicating Effectively in the College Setting

- When choosing a college, research the type of supports they offer students with disabilities
- Some colleges may require an interview for admission. If you need accommodations for the interview, be assertive in order to effectively communicate what you need before the interview
 - Example: “I will need a sign language interpreter during the interview.”
 - Nonexample: “I’m not coming unless you give me the sign language interpreter.”
- If there is something you don’t understand, either in an interview or in class, it is okay to ask for it to be rephrased or repeated
 - Be assertive when asking for clarification
 - Asking for clarification shows that you are being an active listener and helps you to be more engaged in the conversation
 - Example: “I’m not sure I understand the question. Could you rephrase it?”



- Written communication in college is often done through emails, so make sure that your email address is professional
 - Example: Nicole changed her email address from dancergirl77@myemail.com to nicole.a@myemail.com
 - Most college programs will provide you with an email address for you to use to communicate with faculty and staff
- The way you access accommodations in college is different than it was in high school. Some students may be unfamiliar or hesitant to reach out for assistance or accommodations
- Communication is a key part of being a strong self-advocate in college. If you do not effectively express your needs, there is a chance that you will not receive the supports you need
- Communicating effectively about your needs in college means following the procedures the college has in place
 - Example: Becca follows her college's procedures for disclosing her disability by providing documentation, filling out required forms, and meeting with a Disability Services Office staff member
- You may be required to provide documentation such as a diagnosis of your current disability, supporting information, and information about how your disability affects your ability to learn
 - This documentation assists the staff at the college in helping you get the supports you need to be successful
- During your meeting with the Disability Services Office, be respectful and assertive. Take notes of any steps you need to complete next or any feedback you receive
- In most cases, your professors will receive a letter from the Disability Services Office explaining that you have a disability and the accommodations you should receive

Did You Know?

Only 17% of college students with learning disabilities take advantage of learning assistance resources at their school compared to 94% of high school students

(Source: [College Guide for Students With Learning Disabilities](#))



- Plan to have a follow-up discussion with each of your professors about your accommodations in their class
- The best way to communicate your accommodations to your professors is in a one-on-one meeting. Plan to attend your professors' office hours early in the semester to discuss.
 - Example: Before the meeting -- "Hello Professor Smith, I have been working with the Disability Services Office and have a plan for my accommodations. I would like to meet during your office hours in order to discuss them."
 - Example: During the meeting -- "I have a visual impairment, so I benefit from preferred seating in the front of the classroom and notes with larger font."
- Professors are an excellent resource for your success in college. It is important to be comfortable with talking to your professor when you have questions
- Professors may prefer to communicate in different ways. To be an effective communicator, be sure to ask them what type of communication they prefer (email, scheduled appointments, phone call etc.)

Responding Effectively

- Body language, facial expressions, and eye contact are types of nonverbal communication that can show whoever you're talking to that you are interested and listening
- Responding effectively means answering questions clearly and with relevant details
 - Example: "I really enjoy math because I am great at problem solving. I sometimes struggle with time management, but I am working to improve on it."
 - Nonexample: "I'm good at math, but I am usually late to everything."
- Responding and following-up with people is important to effective communication.
 - Respond to emails within 24 hours if possible
 - Try to send emails to faculty and staff during normal business hours (8:00 am- 5:00 pm)



- When you are expecting a response from someone else, you may have to respectfully follow-up to make sure you get a response
- Example: “I just wanted to follow-up on the email I sent you on Tuesday about my scheduled testing time. Is 2:00 confirmed? Thank you.”