

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

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"> ○ Provide large-print version of handouts ○ Orient the person who is visually impaired to the environment (e.g., classroom and hotel) ○ Ask the participant where he/she prefers to sit ○ Position the participant near an electrical outlet, if he/she uses a laptop to take notes ○ Do not stand in front of a glass window or mirror ○ When talking about a picture, describe its content ○ 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"> ○ Consult with the participant about the need for an interpreter and/or a note-taker ○ Ask the participant and interpreter where he/she

	<p>prefers to sit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimize lecture ○ Provide a copy of the instructor's notes and all other relevant materials, in advance, to the interpreter ○ Spell out technical terms to the interpreter ○ Concentrate on not speaking too fast or too loudly; speak at a normal speed and volume ○ Repeat questions and answers from participants ○ Inform participants when you are moving to a new topic ○ Pause every 15 minutes to prevent interpreter fatigue ○ Talk with the participant about how he/she will answer test questions (e.g., use interpreter, require more time)
Mobility Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Find out whether the participant requires adaptive equipment on the job that should also be provided in a training environment ○ Host will ensure that the training venue can accommodate the special needs of the participant ○ Ask the participant whether it would be helpful to have a note-taker ○ Offer to provide a copy of the instructor's notes and all other relevant materials (in lieu of note-taking) ○ 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"> ○ Be flexible about participant attendance; provide an opportunity to make up any missed training so that participant will be eligible for CEUs if he/she passes the class with a 70% ○ Alleviate concerns of other trainees who may be uncomfortable in a training environment with someone who is ill ○ Ensure that the training venue is comfortable ○ Host should be aware of the accommodations required by participants and that they may need a place to lie down during breaks ○ 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
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Section 508	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ http://www.access-board.gov/5088.htm ○ http://section508.gov/
Designing and Delivering Training to Disabled Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ASTD Info-line entitled, “The Americans with Disabilities Act: Impact on Training” (Issue 9203) ○ ASTD Info-line entitled, “The Americans with Disabilities Act: Techniques for Accommodation” (Issue 9204)
Training Style Adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some of the best practices for accommodating disabilities are also best practices for training in general
Visual Aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make your visual aids and handouts large, clear, and readable
Face Your Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For some hearing impaired people, it will be useful to be able to see your face while you are speaking
Vision Impaired Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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.