

High School vs. College Accommodations

Quick Visual Comparison

Topic	High School	College
Primary Focus	Promoting student success	Ensuring equal access
Laws	IDEA and Section 504; students entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	ADA and Section 504; access for otherwise qualified students
Curriculum	Instruction and curriculum may be modified	Course standards and essential requirements are not modified
Who Identifies the Disability	School district evaluates and determines eligibility	Student provides documentation to the disability office
Plans and Documentation	IEP or 504 Plan guides services	No IEP; accommodations determined through an interactive process
Cost of Evaluations	Usually covered by the school district	Student is responsible for obtaining evaluations
Types of Supports	Special education classes, resource rooms, teaching aides, therapy services, extended testing time	Alternative testing arrangements, assistive technology, alternative formats, communication access services
Personal Aides	May be provided by the school district	Not provided by the college
Responsibility	Teachers and parents arrange supports and monitor progress	Students must request accommodations and self-advocate
Academic Structure	Highly structured schedule with frequent reminders and monitoring	More independent schedule with fewer class meetings and heavier reading loads

Attribution: The Advocacy Consortium and [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)

Student Transition Guide: Moving from High School to College

College disability services work differently from high school. This guide highlights the key steps students should take to successfully transition.

1. Register with the Disability Services Office as soon as possible

Students must request accommodations themselves. Contact the campus disability office early and submit documentation that explains the functional impact of the disability.

2. Understand Your Accommodations

Accommodations in college are designed to provide equal access to learning, not to change course requirements. Students are still responsible for meeting academic standards.

3. Communicate with Your Professors

Students typically share accommodation letters with professors and discuss how accommodations will work in each class.

4. Practice Self-Advocacy

College students must explain their needs, ask questions, and follow up if accommodations are not implemented correctly.

5. Manage Your Time Independently

College courses often meet less frequently but require more reading, studying, and independent work. Creating a study schedule is essential.

6. Use Campus Resources

Colleges offer tutoring centers, writing centers, advising support, and assistive technology support that can complement disability accommodations.

Key Takeaway

In high school, adults coordinate services to support student success. In college, students take the lead in requesting accommodations and managing their learning.