

Ten Strategies for a Successful Transition to College for Students with Learning Differences[©]

1. Know Yourself

What makes you strong and confident?

What makes you weak and lose confidence?

What builds you up and energizes you?

What wears you down and exhausts you?

Remember life has challenges. Life is a balancing act. It is your resilience that matters.

2. Know Your Learning Challenges

Can you name and describe your specific cognitive weakness(es)?

What form of auditory or visual presentation, lecture does not work for you?

What is the most difficult type of material for you to learn?

What is your greatest academic weakness?

What methods or styles of instruction do not work for you?

3. Know Your Learning Strengths

Can you name and describe your specific cognitive strength(s)?

What does your ideal study cycle – initial study to final exam – look like?

What are your academic strengths?

What is your ideal writing process?

How is your resourcefulness in finding solutions for challenges?

4. Your Rights

You have rights under the ADA (Americans with Disability Act) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

These laws defines the rights of individuals with disabilities to participate in, and have access to, program benefits and services

You are entitled to reasonable accommodations that are not an undue burden on the school.

Previous provision of accommodations and services does not automatically continue.

If you are 18, this is now your private business and responsibility. Your parents will not be informed, involved, or have their queries answered without your permission.

5. Your Responsibilities

Demonstrate a functional limitation that substantial limits the ability to complete a life function.

Make requests for services and provide requested documentation.

Complete all course requirements in a manner that does not change the course objectives.

Know and follow all college guidelines, requirements, and conduct codes.

6. Your Papers Please

Documentation is required to verify the nature of the disability. Be sure to check specific school requirements.

Documentation must be recent, usually within the last five years (there are variations).

Documentation must be completed by appropriate professional and provide specific diagnosis and (ideally) specific nature of limitations and required accommodations.

7. Disabled Student Services on campus (DSS)

Present requests for accommodations to your DSS office, not to instructors.

DSS will review documentation, determine eligibility and accommodations, review them with you, and prepare letters for faculty.

Learn about the study groups, study skills workshops, tutoring resources and other supports.

Ask about training with helpful technology.

Develop ongoing relationship with a DSS counselor who can make recommendations for resources, assist in evaluating any challenges, and help represent your interests with instructors.

8. In the Classroom

Instructors are most often well informed about student needs, supportive, and will work with you to ensure your success.

Be aware that instructors will strive to provide the accommodations needed.

Instructors are not expected to and will not change course requirements or objectives specifically for your needs.

Changes in accommodations need to be first addressed to DSS, not the instructor.

9. Avoiding (and fixing) Academic Trouble

Read and understand policies and procedures for adding, dropping courses and incompletes.

Track all deadlines for adding and dropping courses and filing for and finishing incompletes.

Read and understand policies and procedures regarding academic probation.

Make sure you understand all course requirements and deadlines.

Always communicate and keep instructors informed of any difficulties you are having, particularly with work completion.

10. Parents as Friends

Do you understand what your parents have done to advocate and find services?

Are you ready to take on that role for yourself?

Do you and your parents have an understanding of when, what, and how you will communicate with them if you are having difficulties?