

# 50 High School Accommodations for Every ADHD Challenge

<https://www.additudemag.com/accommodations-iep-for-high-school-students/>

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No disability should sentence your child to a 13-year struggle in school. Even in high school, where “responsibility” and “accountability” are stressed, students with ADHD or learning disabilities have a right to reasonable accommodations to help them succeed. It’s not only possible to implement accommodations for these students, it’s crucial to their success — both during the high school years and in the future.

[Susan Yellin, Esq.](#), director of advocacy and transition services at [The Yellin Center for Mind, Brain, and Education](#), says the two most common school difficulties for students with ADHD are input issues and output issues. Input issues are born of distraction — if your mind is wandering, you don’t comprehend what you’re hearing or reading (the input). Additionally, says Yellin, “executive functioning deficits common with ADHD intertwine with output.” A student may struggle to organize an essay, or forget to bring home, complete, or turn in homework. He or she may have learned the material, but still struggle to output the work required to show it. Classroom accommodations can help teens with ADHD manage these challenges, leveling the playing field.

## Determining the Right Accommodations for Your Student

To determine the most appropriate and impactful accommodations for your child, first sit down with him to discuss and list his biggest school struggles. Encourage him to describe, in detail, why each one is a struggle, when he’s aware of the reasons. If he’s not sure why he’s having trouble with a certain task or area, brainstorm possibilities together.

Once you have a list of challenges, identify one or more accommodations to address each one. When you’re done, you’ll have a list of struggles and potential solutions ready to present to the school.

Not sure what to ask for? Here are some of the most effective classroom accommodations to help your child succeed in grades 9 through 12 — without sacrificing personal accountability. (Keep in mind, no student will need all of these accommodations.)

## Potential High School Accommodations

### MATH

- Allow extra time on tests so the student is not rushed. Avoid timed tests of basic facts, if possible.
- Provide frequent checks for accuracy during classwork. Set a certain number of problems to complete (one row only, or four or five problems), and check these before the student is permitted to continue.
- List the steps/procedures for multi-step problems and algorithms. Post clearly numbered steps and/or give the student a desk-copy model of the steps needed to solve problems.
- Keep sample math problems on the board and have the student write them in a notebook for reference.

- Reduce the number of problems assigned. Ten completed problems written neatly, with work shown — rather than a full page of problems — is enough to assess a student’s understanding.

## WRITING

- Allow the use of speech-to-text software, such as the free tool in Google Docs or [Dragon Dictation](#).
- Allow the student to substitute written papers or essays for original videos, dioramas, posters, PowerPoint presentations, etc.
- Allow typing instead of writing by hand.
- Offer oral assessments instead of written.
- Give the student writing templates that model correct writing forms (e.g., a persuasive essay, a narrative) and scaffold the writing process with prompts.
- Offer a framework for essay organization — like a graphic organizer, mind map, story map, timeline, the [POWER](#) (Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, Revise) method, or software like [Draft: Builder](#), [Inspiration](#), or [Xmind](#).
- Break writing assignments into small steps.
- Don’t grade for neatness.
- Support poor spelling and grammar with contextual spell checkers like [Ginger Software](#) or [Ghotit Real Writer](#), or word prediction software like [Co:Writer](#), [Word Q](#) or [Speak Q](#).
- Create worksheets and exams using a PDF annotation software like [Adobe Reader 11](#), [Acrobat Reader DC](#), or Mac Preview, allowing the student to use mouse and keyboard skills to enter responses instead of overtaxing writing skills.

## READING

- Read tests aloud to the student.
- Use human-narrated audio books, e-texts with text-to-speech software, or a combination program like [Kindle Immersion reading](#) or [LearningAlly audiobooks](#), allowing the student to see *and* hear the text for improved comprehension.
- Allow the use of highlighters and sticky notes to mark up print books, or literacy software like [Kurzweil 3000](#) to do the same in e-texts, to aid understanding and retention in students with critical thinking issues and poor working memory.

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- Provide an extra set of books to keep at home.
- Set a goal of completing 75 percent of the assigned homework.
- Ask the student twice during class how he will remember facts or rules discussed.
- Provide the student with guided notes or full classroom notes.
- Record audio of the class and then synchronize this with hand-written or typed notes using a tool like the [Livescribe Smartpen](#), [Notability](#), or [Microsoft OneNote](#).

- Use assistive technology to help the student keep up with assignments (rather than trying to juggle lots of loose papers).
- Allow the student extended time on classwork, homework, quizzes, and tests.
- Provide detailed, written instructions.
- Email the parent a list of assignments or post assignments to the school website.
- Use a digital notebook or web clipper utility like [Evernote](#) to create a cumulative “knowledge bank” of prior learning. These programs simulate a paper binder and automatically retain a link to their source.
- Create folders that are categorized by “next action:” to turn in, give to parents, give to teacher, or complete tonight.
- Allow the student to use a kitchen timer or visual task timer — like [Time Timer](#), [Watchminder](#), or [DropTask](#) — to see time’s passage and make it less of an abstract concept.
- Provide time once a week for locker cleanout.
- Color-code academic materials. Use green, for example, for all science notebooks, binders, folders, and textbook covers. Keep related classroom books and materials in bins of the same hue.
- Provide study guides several days before a test.

## **EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOR**

- Offer a calm-down spot or break for the student to use when needed. Create a plan ahead of time so the student can signal the teacher and go to the predetermined break spot without attracting attention and without disruption.
- Schedule a weekly check-in with the guidance counselor and/or the special education teacher.
- Let the student run errands for the teacher to provide a break.
- Check in with the student occasionally to assess mood.
- Have a crisis plan or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for angry outbursts, if they’re a frequent problem.
- Post clear expectations and consequences.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- Assign an adult mentor to check in with the student and work with him or her on skills and assignments.
- Allow the student to correct mistakes on tests for extra credit.
- Provide a guided study hall period.
- Allow the student to leave class early for more time to change classes or to avoid crowded and overwhelming hallways.
- Invite the student to participate in a social-skills group.

- Seat the student front and center, near the teacher, and away from doors or windows where noise or passing students may be a distraction.
- Cue the student to stay on task with a private signal — a gentle tap on the shoulder, for example.
- Schedule a five-minute period for the student to check over his or her work before turning in homework or tests.
- Illustrate vocabulary words and science concepts with small drawings or stick figures.
- Compliment positive behavior and work.
- Provide an alternative activity other than a large assembly, like a pep rally, for students with sensory sensitivities, anxiety, or overwhelm in crowds.

## Implementing Accommodations at School

Once you've determined some appropriate accommodations to help your student, the next step is presenting them to the school. When teachers and administrators agree to implement them for your child, you may decide on an informal agreement to that effect, or the accommodations may be included in a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

A 504 Plan or IEP, says Yellin, is “not a statement to teachers that ‘it might be nice if you implement it.’ An IEP is a legal document stating that the child is entitled to these [accommodations]. Teachers don't have the option, legally, to ignore this. It's a contract — a legal statement incumbent on the teachers.”

Nonetheless, you and your teen must be diligent about making sure accommodations are applied. If you find that some or all of your child's teachers aren't implementing the accommodations in the classroom, Yellin recommends a nice conversation with teachers first. Bring them a copy of the IEP or 504 Plan and highlight important aspects for them, she advises. Remind teachers that, “When seeking accommodations on the SAT or ACT, you have to show that the student is already using these accommodations in class in order to get them on these types of tests.” Visit [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org) for updated details on securing accommodations on the SAT.

If the parent-teacher meeting doesn't prompt a change, Yellin says it's time to escalate. Call an IEP or 504 meeting with the school to come up with a mechanism that ensures teacher compliance. Escalate further to a hearing before a state officer or a civil rights complaint, if necessary. It's that important, especially during the high school years.

## What If Your Student Refuses Accommodations?

Teens with ADHD are notorious for avoiding or refusing help, especially when it calls peer attention to their differences and struggles. If your child is refusing accommodations due to possible social implications, Yellin advises first educating teachers and classmates about ADHD and learning disabilities. “If the teacher is not sufficiently sensitive, put (teacher education) in the IEP.”

You have two choices when your child is pushing back against accommodations at school: heed their input and let them go it alone, or insist on accommodations. If your child would be a B- student without accommodations and a B+ student with them, pushing for accommodations likely isn't worth the battle and

potential stigma. However, if your child is a D or F student without accommodations and an A, B, or C student with them, you should insist on the accommodations.

If your child won't get on board, conduct an experiment on the efficacy of accommodations. Work with a teacher to give two assessments: one with accommodations and one without. Or do two practice SATs at home, one with extended time and one without. Tell your student, "Let's see how you do." If the accommodations make a big difference in performance, it should be clear to your child that they really are a benefit.

Once a child starts high school, the stakes grow higher all around. Not only do grades now matter for getting into college, but "this is also an important opportunity for kids to build their advocacy skills and understand that, once they leave high school, they're on their own," says Yellin. "In college, much more responsibility is on them — *they* have to identify, *they* have to provide documentation, *they* have to go to their professors for accommodations." Pretty soon, it will be all on them — now is the time to make sure they're prepared.