

Are You Ready for College?

As a student with a disability, it is important to know that you will need all the competencies anyone attending college needs *plus* whatever special skills or strategies are necessary for you to cope with your particular disability. Your high school is required to provide transition services; college is not. It is best to acquire the skills that you will need in college while you are still in high school rather than waiting until you arrive on a college campus. Arriving at college feeling confident in yourself and ready to meet the challenges can make the difference between success and failure.

It may be useful to complete the following self-assessment to help you decide if college is the best choice for you at this time. If you cannot answer some of these questions, discuss them with your parents, teachers, counselors, and others who will give you honest answers.

1) How good is my academic background?

- Am I enrolled in college prep classes that will prepare me for college-level course work?
- Do I have the same assignments and am I mastering the same body of knowledge and skills as other students?
- Have I planned to take all of the prerequisite courses that I will need to get into college?

2) Are my standardized test scores adequate?

- What is the range of scores required by the colleges that I am interested in?
- Have I been able to score within that range with or without accommodations?

3) What are my individual strengths and weaknesses?

- Do I have difficulty decoding, comprehending, or completing reading assignments within a reasonable time?
- Do I have difficulty with math?
- Am I good with mathematical/quantitative reasoning?
- Do I need to use a calculator for basic math?
- How good is my written expression?
- Is my handwriting legible?
- Have I mastered grammatical, spelling, editing, and re-writing skills?
- Can I research and organize material for lengthy compositions and term papers?

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4) On what kinds of tests do I perform well?

- Am I prepared for challenging multiple-choice or short-answer questions that require me to understand and apply the material taught?
- Do I perform well on written essays?

5) Are my study skills and learning strategies adequate?

- Do I have good listening skills?
- Do I take good notes?
- Do I know how to determine what information is important and how to study for exams?
- Am I organized enough to juggle a class schedule, complete short-term and long-term assignments, and stay current with the course syllabus?
- Can I sustain attention in challenging classes?

6) Am I disciplined enough to manage my time and meet academic deadlines?

- Do I deal well with unstructured environments?
- Can I handle the choices and freedoms that I will face in a college environment?

7) Am I determined to succeed in school?

- Am I willing to work harder than other students on occasion to accomplish the same goals?
- If I receive a poor grade on a test or a paper, am I willing to contact a teacher and accept constructive criticism in order to improve my performance?

8) Do I have a positive attitude and am I flexible?

- Are my confidence and self-esteem reasonably healthy?
- Am I able to withstand difficulties and pressure?
- What effect does stress have on my academic achievement?

9) Do I have good problem-solving and decision-making skills?

- Can I access community and college resources for assistance if needed?
- Do I know how to monitor my progress in academic settings?

Think about your answers.

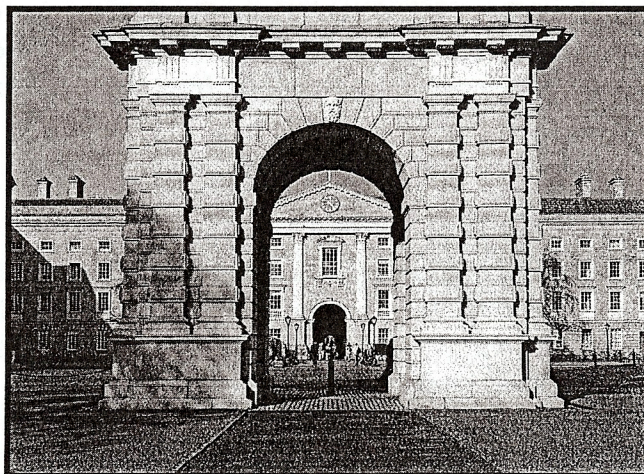
Are they the answers of someone who is ready for college?

What Type of Support Is Available at College?

What makes the transition process especially confusing is that every college differs in terms of how much support is offered to students with disabilities. Although special education services do not generally exist at the college level, some colleges do in fact offer comprehensive support programs to students with disabilities.

Most colleges and universities will have information about services for students with disabilities listed on their Web site. You may also find guidelines for the type of disability documentation that is required to obtain accommodations as well as descriptions of the types of services that are available to all students on a particular campus (e.g., writing or math labs, Freshman Year Experiences, summer orientation camps, peer tutoring services, personal or career counseling, study skills instruction).

Most campuses offer a tour. At that time, you may request to talk with someone in the college Disability Services Office as well as with students on campus who have a similar disability. Matching a college to fit your learning style is an important first step to success.



Questions to Ask a College Disability Services Office

1. What information must be provided to document a disability and to whom should it be given? How recent should the documentation be?
2. How accessible is the campus to students with physical disabilities?
 - A. Availability of transportation across campus?
 - B. Accessibility of buildings?
3. Where is the Disability Services Office on campus and does it have evening hours?
4. How is the Disability Services Office staffed?
5. Is the staff trained in specialized areas of disabilities?
6. How many staff are full-time? How many are part-time?
7. Are there extra costs associated with the disability support programs?
8. Is there an orientation program or a summer preparation course especially designed for students with disabilities?
9. Who supervises testing accommodations?
10. What is the retention rate for all first-year students and how does this compare with the rate for students with disabilities?
11. What special services are provided to students with disabilities?
12. Are supports available in the areas of study skills, writing, organizational skills, or time management? Are the programs staffed by individuals trained to work with students with disabilities?
13. Is course-specific tutoring available? Is this different than the services provided by the Disability Services Office staff?
14. Are counseling services available in personal, academic, or vocational areas?
15. What (assistive) technology is available?
16. Do you anticipate that the services you are describing to me now will be available next year?
17. What is the school's history of providing disability services? Have any lawsuits or Office for Civil Rights complaints been filed against the school in the past five years? If yes, how were these resolved?
18. What is the climate on campus for students with disabilities?