

## TIPS FOR TEST TAKERS WITH DISABILITIES



Taking a test is an opportunity to demonstrate what you know and, in some cases, your readiness for the next step in your education or career. However, as a test taker with a disability, you may have found that tests also can pose disability-related barriers — potentially preventing you from demonstrating your true knowledge and skills.

It is helpful to have a good understanding of the nature of your test and which accommodations might be appropriate for you. The five steps listed throughout this document will help you learn about test format, break times and test site accessibility conditions. They will also explain how to prepare your request for accommodations and your supporting documentation.



## STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT THE TEST

First, find out whether the test is paper delivered or computer delivered. You should then read about the test in the appropriate ETS information or registration bulletin that is available at [www.ets.org/disabilities/resources/bulletins\\_and\\_supplements](http://www.ets.org/disabilities/resources/bulletins_and_supplements) and review the content areas covered by the test.

Second, be sure you understand the format of the test. Is it entirely multiple choice or are there short-answer and essay questions as well? Some tests may also have audio or video content, tables and charts, or other media. Test format may influence your accommodation requests (e.g., a test with audio content may require accommodations if you have hearing loss).

Next, you should find out if you are permitted to go back to questions that you skipped and learn about the test-taking tools that may be available to you even if you don't request accommodations. For example, some tests provide an on-screen calculator and, for most tests, scratch paper is available to all test takers.

Finally, take practice tests and view sample questions to help you prepare for your exam(s). View the test preparation materials online at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) to learn about the wide variety of resources that ETS programs offer.

## STEP 2: UNDERSTAND TEST LENGTH AND BREAK TIMING

### Test Length

Many test takers with disabilities are permitted to take classroom tests with extra time, typically 50 or 100 percent more time than the time allotted to the class overall. However, many standardized tests are four or more hours long. Understanding how a high-stakes test is timed is critical, especially if you are considering asking for 50 or 100 percent extra time.

If you have difficulty sustaining your attention and focus over time, or tend to get fatigued and distracted if sitting for a prolonged period, it is important to think through the implications of dramatically lengthening the duration of an exam that is already several hours long.

### Breaks

Extra breaks can frequently be a more effective accommodation than extended testing time. Some ETS tests have scheduled breaks for all test takers. Be sure to review this information on the testing program website for the test you plan to take. Carefully consider if you will need additional and/or longer breaks than what is permitted for all test takers.

If you are approved for extra breaks on an ETS test, you will be able to stop the testing clock while you take your break. Although it is best to take a break at the end of a section, we recognize that for some medical conditions immediate breaks may be necessary; you will be permitted to take a break at your discretion in those instances.

## STEP 3: PREPARE YOUR REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

**Plan ahead.** Submit your request as early as possible. **Documentation review takes approximately four to six weeks once your completed paperwork has been received.** If your request is deemed incomplete by ETS and additional documentation must be submitted, it can be another four to six weeks from the time the new documentation is



received until the review is complete. You want to be sure you have ample time to submit the necessary information and wait for a decision.

**Make sure your disability documentation is up to date.** Check the *ETS Disability Guidelines* online at [www.ets.org/disabilities/test\\_takers/disability\\_documentation](http://www.ets.org/disabilities/test_takers/disability_documentation). Even if you have a lifelong condition, your ability to compensate for your disability may be different now than it was in your earlier educational experiences (e.g., elementary school). Therefore, the test accommodations you need may have also changed. This is why it is important to include:

- current documentation of your disability
- your most recent history of accommodation use
- the current impact of your condition on academic tasks
- your need for accommodations on the test you are planning to take

**Talk with the qualified professional who completed your most recent evaluation.**

Provide your doctor or evaluator with a copy of ETS documentation guidelines if you need updated documentation and to be sure your documentation meets the testing agency's criteria. A note from your doctor or evaluator simply stating a diagnosis is usually not sufficient. It is best to provide a comprehensive report/letter detailing your condition/disability and how it impacts you in academic tasks, such as test taking. It is most helpful if the doctor or evaluator includes the rationale for each requested accommodation.

**Consult with the disability service provider (DSP).** If you are a student on a college or university campus and have been working with the DSP, schedule an appointment and review your records with this individual. Your DSP can assist you in assembling your request for accommodations and ensuring you have all of the required materials. Request that your DSP complete a Certification of Eligibility (COE): Accommodation History form or submit a letter of support that documents the types of accommodations you have used and the history of your accommodation use.

**Provide a personal statement.** The statement can be a way for you to explain the limitations you experience and how those limitations impact your test-taking performance. This can be an important supplement to the documentation submitted by your evaluator. Read *Guidance on How to Write a Personal Statement* online at [www.ets.org/s/disabilities/pdf/personal-statement.pdf](http://www.ets.org/s/disabilities/pdf/personal-statement.pdf) for tips on writing an effective personal statement.

## STEP 4: ONCE YOU HEAR FROM ETS

If you are approved for accommodations, your approval letter will be sent via email. This letter will provide you with directions for scheduling your test. Do not schedule a test prior to receiving this notification. If you have any questions regarding your accommodations or test site, contact ETS Disability Services by email at [stassd@ets.org](mailto:stassd@ets.org) or call 1-609-771-7780.

If any or all of your requested accommodations were not approved, you will receive a decision letter by email. Consider whether the approved accommodations are sufficient or whether you want to appeal the decision. The decision letter will provide directions on how to appeal the decision.

If your accommodations request is missing information or documentation, work with your evaluator and/or DSP to obtain the required materials for ETS.

## THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

- Accommodations on high-stakes tests are designed to permit equal access to the test, not to achieve an outcome — such as finishing the test or performing your best.
- While your evaluator's suggestions and your preferences will be given considerable weight, some accommodations may be impossible or not permissible because they would fundamentally alter the nature of the test or result in invalid scores.
- Most high-stakes tests are administered in carefully controlled test centers. Typically, relatively few test takers are testing at any given time and most will be seated at individual workstations that resemble library carrels. The test center's proctors will ensure that the environment is quiet and conducive to testing. Therefore, some accommodations that are appropriate for classroom tests (e.g., "preferential seating," "private room") may not be necessary on a high-stakes test.



## STEP 5: REVIEW TEST SITE LOCATION AND CONDITIONS

Consider the amount of travel time needed to get to your test site — including the volume of traffic and time of day your test is scheduled. Ideally, you should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to testing time.

If you have any concerns about physical access to the test site, contact ETS Disability Services in advance to discuss your concerns. Although most standard test centers are fully accessible, a few may be in older buildings that could pose challenges. You should also explore the testing site conditions, including test center hours, the size of the center, the number of testing carrels available and how many test takers can be served at a time.

You should also find out what resources the test center can provide (e.g., earplugs or earmuffs). Prometric® allows certain pre-approved personal items into its test centers. It is recommended that you view the list of pre-approved personal items online at <https://www.prometric.com/sites/default/files/Permissible-items.pdf> before the test date.

Prometric also offers a program called “Test Drive” for a nominal fee. This program allows you to walk through, on a practice basis, all check-in and testing procedures that occur at the test center on test day. View Prometric Test Drive on the test center’s website at [www.prometric.com/en-us/for-test-takers/prepare-for-test-day/pages/take-a-practice-test.aspx](http://www.prometric.com/en-us/for-test-takers/prepare-for-test-day/pages/take-a-practice-test.aspx) to find information about this program and schedule an appointment.



### REMEMBER THESE TIPS DURING THE TEST

All high-stakes tests are timed, even those taken with accommodations.

- Read the directions and each question thoroughly, making certain that you understand exactly what is expected.
- Always read multiple-choice questions carefully. First pause and try to predict the correct answer before looking at the answer options.
- If you are still unsure about the correct answer, reread the question and try to eliminate one or two choices that are clearly wrong so that you can make an educated guess. Do not allow yourself to become stuck on a question.
- The goal may not be to finish the test but to do well. Keep in mind that not everyone finishes the test. In fact, on some high-stakes tests, most people do not finish the test.

We wish you the best on test day!

For additional questions, please visit our Frequently Asked Questions page at [www.ets.org/disabilities/test\\_takers/faq](http://www.ets.org/disabilities/test_takers/faq).

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