

ACCOMMODATION CHEAT SHEET

IEP · 504 · RTI / MTSS



A complete reference guide for special education teachers, case managers,
general education teachers, and IEP team members.

Covers IEP Accommodations · 504 Plans · RTI/MTSS Tiers

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

A quick orientation for IEP teams, case managers, and educators

This guide is organized into three major frameworks used in US special education:

SECTION	WHAT IT COVERS
Section 1: IEP	Accommodations for students with Individualized Education Programs — organized by accommodation category (Presentation, Response, Time, Setting, Materials, Behavioral/Social-Emotional)
Section 2: 504	Accommodations for 504 Plans — students who do not qualify for special education but need support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
Section 3: RTI/MTSS	Tiered intervention strategies — Tier 1 (universal), Tier 2 (targeted), and Tier 3 (intensive) within the Response to Intervention / Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework

⚡ Key Reminders for IEP Teams

- Accommodations change HOW a student learns — not WHAT they learn.
- Modifications change the learning expectations or content itself.
- All IEP and 504 accommodations must be consistently implemented across all classrooms.
- RTI/MTSS is a prevention and early intervention model — not a pipeline to special education.

SECTION 1: IEP ACCOMMODATIONS

Individualized Education Program — A legally binding document under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

What are IEP Accommodations?

IEP accommodations are supports and services written into a student's Individualized Education Program that change HOW a student accesses learning — not WHAT they are expected to learn. They are legally required to be implemented consistently by ALL teachers who work with the student. Failure to implement accommodations is a violation of federal law (IDEA).

Presentation Accommodations

Change how information and content are delivered to the student.

Accommodation	Disability / Eligibility	Grade Level	Implementation Notes
Read aloud instructions and test items	All disabilities affecting reading decoding	All grades	Ensure reader uses neutral tone; allow re-reads
Provide written directions in addition to verbal	ADHD, Autism, Processing Disorders	All grades	Post on board and provide on paper
Use visual supports (charts, diagrams, graphic organizers)	Autism, Intellectual Disability, ELL with IEP	K–12	Consistent use across subjects
Preferential seating near teacher or board	ADHD, Hearing/Vision impairment, Anxiety	All grades	Avoid labeling; frame as classroom design
Reduce visual clutter on worksheets/tests	ADHD, Processing Disorders, Low Vision	All grades	Use 1.5 spacing, large margins, chunked items
Use large print or magnification	Visual Impairment, Low Vision	All grades	Minimum 18pt; work with vision specialist
Provide audio recordings of texts	Dyslexia, Blind/VI, TBI	Gr 3+	Apps: Learning Ally, Bookshare, Voice Dream
Allow use of text-to-speech technology	Dyslexia, Autism, Cerebral Palsy	Gr 2+	Kurzweil, Read&Write, built-in OS tools
Sign language interpretation	Deaf/Hard of Hearing	All grades	Must be IEP-mandated; certified interpreter
Provide vocabulary list or glossary	Intellectual Disability, ELL, LD	All grades	Accessible language; visual supports included

Response Accommodations

Change how students demonstrate their knowledge and complete assignments.

Accommodation	Disability / Eligibility	Grade Level	Implementation Notes
Allow verbal responses instead of written	Dysgraphia, Cerebral Palsy, Anxiety	All grades	Use recorder or scribe; consistent across tests
Permit use of word processor / keyboard	Dysgraphia, Physical Disability, ADHD	Gr 2+	Spell-check use must be specified in IEP
Provide scribe for written responses	Physical Disability, Dysgraphia, VI	All grades	Scribe writes verbatim; does not correct
Allow use of AAC device for responses	Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Non-verbal	All grades	Device must be programmed and available daily
Reduce written output requirements	Dysgraphia, ADHD, Anxiety	All grades	Focus on content quality over quantity
Accept dictation (speech-to-text)	Physical Disability, Dysgraphia, LD	Gr 2+	Dragon NaturallySpeaking, Google Voice
Provide graphic organizer to structure responses	LD, ID, Autism, ADHD	K–12	Pre-teach organizer use; scaffold gradually
Allow drawing, visual, or multimedia responses	Autism, Intellectual Disability, ELL	K–8	Assess concept understanding, not format
Modified writing expectations (sentence vs paragraph)	Intellectual Disability, Autism, ELL	All grades	IEP must specify modification level
Allow use of calculator or math tools	Dyscalculia, ADHD, LD in Math	Gr 3+	Specify tool type; distinguish from computation goal

Time & Scheduling Accommodations

Adjust the timing or sequencing of tasks, tests, and activities.

Accommodation	Disability / Eligibility	Grade Level	Implementation Notes
Extended time on tests and assignments (1.5x)	ADHD, LD, Anxiety, Processing Disorders	All grades	Specify ratio in IEP (1.5x, 2x, unlimited)
Extended time on tests and assignments (2x)	Significant cognitive or processing delays	All grades	Document rationale; ensure consistent admin
Frequent breaks during instruction or testing	ADHD, Anxiety, Autism, Sensory needs	All grades	Use visual break timer; specify break length
Preferential scheduling (best learning time)	ADHD, Seizure Disorder, Chronic Illness	All grades	Math/ELA AM for peak attention
Chunk assignments into smaller segments	ADHD, Anxiety, Executive Function deficits	All grades	Use task analysis; check off each segment
Provide advance notice of tests and due dates	ADHD, Anxiety, Executive Function	All grades	Post weekly agenda; send home calendar
Allow assignment completion across multiple sessions	Chronic Illness, Anxiety, TBI	All grades	Document in IEP; communicate to gen ed
Modified pacing (more time per unit)	Intellectual Disability, Autism, TBI	All grades	Adjust curriculum map; track goals separately
Allow late submission without penalty	ADHD, Executive Function, Anxiety	Gr 4+	Distinguish from modification; IEP-specific
Alternative test timing (not during peak anxiety)	Anxiety Disorder, PTSD	All grades	Work with school counselor on schedule

Setting / Environment Accommodations

Change the physical or social environment where instruction or assessment occurs.

Accommodation	Disability / Eligibility	Grade Level	Implementation Notes
Small group testing environment	ADHD, Anxiety, Autism, LD	All grades	Standard: up to 5 students in separate space
Individual (1:1) testing environment	Significant Anxiety, Autism, Severe ADHD	All grades	Reserve for documented, significant need
Reduced-distraction environment for work/testing	ADHD, Autism, Sensory Processing	All grades	Carrel, library, resource room, hallway space
Access to sensory tools during instruction	Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder	All grades	Fidgets, weighted blanket, noise-canceling
Allow flexible seating options	ADHD, Autism, Sensory needs, Anxiety	All grades	Standing desk, wobble stool, floor seating
Reduced class size or co-taught classroom	Multiple disabilities, Emotional BD	All grades	Coordinate with admin for placement decisions
Quiet space for cool-down or emotional regulation	Emotional BD, Anxiety, PTSD, Autism	All grades	Must be non-punitive; student-chosen access
Access to noise-canceling headphones	Sensory Processing, Autism, ADHD	All grades	Train student on independent use
Consistent seating assignment (no random changes)	Autism, Anxiety, Sensory sensitivity	All grades	Inform substitute teachers proactively
Minimize transitions or provide transition warnings	Autism, ADHD, Intellectual Disability	All grades	5-min and 1-min visual/verbal warnings

Materials & Tools Accommodations

Provide specialized tools, assistive technology, or modified materials.

Accommodation	Disability / Eligibility	Grade Level	Implementation Notes
Provide copy of class notes or teacher slides	ADHD, LD, Physical Disability, TBI	Gr 3+	Pre-printed or digital; not a substitute for note skills
Highlighted or color-coded textbooks/materials	LD, Dyslexia, VI, ADHD	All grades	Pre-highlight key concepts; color-code sections
Graphic organizers and structured worksheets	LD, Autism, ID, ADHD	All grades	Consistent format across subjects
Manipulatives for math instruction and testing	Dyscalculia, ID, Autism	K–8	Base-10 blocks, number lines, fraction tiles
Personal word wall or vocabulary reference sheet	LD, ELL, ID, Autism	All grades	Updated monthly; kept in student binder
Assistive technology (AAC, screen reader, magnifier)	Multiple disabilities, VI, CP	All grades	Must be assessed, trained, and IEP-documented
Audio books and digital text versions	Dyslexia, VI, TBI, LD	Gr 2+	Bookshare, Learning Ally, school library access
Anchor charts and visual reference posters	Autism, ID, ADHD, LD	K–8	Keep posted consistently; reference during work
Number line, times table, or formula reference card	Dyscalculia, ADHD, LD in Math	Gr 2+	Specify in IEP whether allowed during tests
Modified or leveled reading materials	Intellectual Disability, Dyslexia, ELL	All grades	Match Lexile level; preserve grade content focus

Behavioral & Social-Emotional Accommodations

Support regulation, behavior, and social-emotional wellbeing in the school environment.

Accommodation	Disability / Eligibility	Grade Level	Implementation Notes
Check-in / check-out (CICO) daily support system	Emotional BD, ADHD, Anxiety, Autism	Gr K–12	Mentor-based; 2–3 min AM and PM daily
Visual behavior support system or self-monitoring chart	ADHD, Autism, Emotional BD	K–8	Student-led; focus on positive behavior
Pre-teach social situations and expectations	Autism, Social Communication Disorder	All grades	Social stories, video modeling, role-play
Provide access to sensory breaks (scheduled)	Autism, ADHD, Sensory needs	All grades	OT-recommended; written into IEP schedule
Allow movement breaks during instruction	ADHD, Autism, Sensory needs	All grades	Brain breaks, errand running, standing work
Use non-verbal cues instead of public correction	Anxiety, Autism, ODD, Emotional BD	All grades	Signal card, tap on desk, visual reminder
Provide calm-down kit or regulation tools	Anxiety, PTSD, Emotional BD, Autism	All grades	Co-created with student; stored at desk
Reduced homework load	ADHD, Anxiety, Chronic Illness, Autism	All grades	Quality over quantity; IEP documentation required
Modified behavioral expectations during transitions	Autism, Emotional BD, ADHD	All grades	Structured transition routine; visual supports
Access to trusted adult or safe person in school	Anxiety, PTSD, Selective Mutism	All grades	Pre-arranged; student knows who/where/when

SECTION 2: 504 ACCOMMODATIONS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act — Covers students with disabilities who do not qualify for special education under IDEA

IEP vs. 504 — Quick Distinction

A 504 Plan is NOT an IEP. A 504 provides accommodations only — it does not include special education services, goals, or related services. Students with 504 Plans are educated entirely in general education settings. 504 is enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), not by IDEA. Failure to implement 504 accommodations is a civil rights violation.

Instructional & Academic 504 Accommodations

Accommodation	Qualifying Conditions	Implementation Notes
Extended time on tests and quizzes (1.5x)	ADHD, Anxiety, Chronic Illness, Depression	Documented in 504 Plan; all tests/quizzes
Preferential seating (front, low-distraction area)	ADHD, Hearing Loss, Anxiety, Low Vision	Communicate to all teachers each semester
Copies of notes or guided notes provided	ADHD, Processing Speed Deficits, Depression	Teacher or peer notes; consistent format
Reduced homework load or modified assignments	ADHD, Chronic Illness, Anxiety, Depression	Quality focus; same objectives
Allow use of word processor for writing tasks	Dysgraphia, Physical Disability, ADHD	Specify spell-check permissions
Text-to-speech technology access	Dyslexia, Low Vision, Processing Disorder	App or school-provided device
Use of calculator for computation tasks	Dyscalculia, ADHD	Specify allowed on tests vs. classwork
Chunked assignments with checkpoints	ADHD, Anxiety, Executive Function	Teacher check-ins at each milestone
Access to graphic organizers for writing	ADHD, LD, Processing Disorder	Consistent format across classes
Visual schedule posted at desk	ADHD, Anxiety	Digital or laminated; updated weekly

 **Testing & Assessment 504 Accommodations**

Accommodation	Qualifying Conditions	Implementation Notes
Separate testing room or small group setting	ADHD, Anxiety, Sensory Sensitivity	Coordinate with testing coordinator
Extended time (1.5x or 2x) on all assessments	ADHD, Anxiety, Processing Speed, Chronic Illness	Must apply to all standardized tests too
Read aloud for all test directions	Processing Disorder, Anxiety, LD	Neutral tone; re-reads allowed
Allow breaks during testing	ADHD, Anxiety, Chronic Illness, Seizure Disorder	Clock stops during breaks
Use of familiar prompts or test-taking aids	Anxiety, ADHD	Formula sheet, vocabulary list (specified)
Oral responses permitted in lieu of written	Dysgraphia, Physical Disability, Anxiety	Recorded or scribed; consistent across teachers
Multiple test sessions (not all in one sitting)	Chronic Illness, ADHD, Anxiety, TBI	Document session schedule in 504
Reduce answer choices on multiple choice (4→3)	Processing Disorder, Intellectual challenges	Modify test format in advance
Large print test versions	Low Vision, Migraine History	Minimum 18pt; request from test maker
Test in AM only (peak performance time)	ADHD, Chronic Illness, Medication timing	Schedule coordination with counselor



Environmental & Behavioral 504 Accommodations

Accommodation	Qualifying Conditions	Implementation Notes
Access to sensory tools (fidget, stress ball)	ADHD, Anxiety, Sensory Sensitivity	Non-disruptive use; teach appropriate use
Permission to wear noise-canceling headphones	Sensory Sensitivity, ADHD, Anxiety	During independent work; not during instruction
Flexible seating options (standing desk, wobble stool)	ADHD, Physical Disability, Anxiety	Discuss with student; consistent availability
Scheduled movement breaks	ADHD, Physical Disability, Anxiety	Every 20–30 min; built into class structure
Quiet space for anxiety regulation	Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, PTSD	Non-punitive; self-initiated access
Permission to leave class for cool-down	Anxiety, Emotional dysregulation, ADHD	With quiet signal; pre-agreed destination
Advanced notice for schedule changes	Anxiety, ADHD, Autism-spectrum traits	Email/verbal notice; visual schedule updated
Non-verbal cues for redirection (instead of public correction)	Anxiety, ADHD, ODD traits	Signal card; quiet proximity; avoid callouts
Access to water bottle and snack during class	Diabetes, Chronic Illness, ADHD (medication)	Medical documentation on file
Frequent check-ins with counselor or trusted adult	Anxiety, Depression, PTSD, Social-Emotional needs	Weekly minimum; crisis protocol in place

 **Health & Medical 504 Accommodations**

Accommodation	Qualifying Conditions	Implementation Notes
Access to medication during school day	Diabetes, ADHD, Seizure Disorder, Asthma	Medication authorization form required
Nurse check-ins (scheduled or as-needed)	Diabetes, Chronic Pain, Anxiety	Private pass; no public disclosure
Attendance flexibility for medical appointments	Chronic Illness, Mental Health treatment	Absences marked as medical, not unexcused
Rest periods during the day as needed	Chronic Fatigue, Cancer, Cardiac Conditions	Designated quiet space; schedule adjusted
Permission to leave class for medical needs without asking	Diabetes, Crohn's, Bladder conditions, Anxiety	Private signal; no questions in class
Modified PE participation plan	Physical Disability, Cardiac, Asthma, Orthopedic	Doctor's note + PE teacher coordination
Emergency action plan on file and communicated	Seizure Disorder, Severe Allergy, Diabetes	All staff trained; plan posted in classroom
Modified cafeteria plan for food allergies	Severe Allergy (anaphylaxis)	Allergen-free table; staff trained on EpiPen
Access to blood glucose monitoring during class	Type 1 Diabetes	CGM or fingerstick; no permission needed
Transportation accommodations (bus, accessible vehicle)	Physical Disability, Chronic Illness, Low Mobility	Coordinate with transportation department

SECTION 3: RTI / MTSS STRATEGIES

Response to Intervention / Multi-Tiered System of Supports — A prevention framework for academic and behavioral support

What is RTI / MTSS?

RTI (Response to Intervention) and MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) are prevention-oriented frameworks that provide increasing levels of support to students based on data. RTI/MTSS is NOT a process for identifying students with disabilities — it is a proactive support model. However, a student's lack of response to Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (with documented data) can inform a referral for special education evaluation.

◇ TIER 1 — Universal Supports (All Students)

High-quality core instruction and proactive classroom strategies for ALL students. Approximately 80% of students should succeed at this tier.

Strategy / Intervention	Target Students	Implementation Notes
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles	All students	Multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression
Clear and consistent classroom routines	All students	Post daily schedule; review routines regularly
Differentiated instruction by readiness level	All students	Flexible grouping; tiered tasks; choice boards
Brain breaks and movement opportunities	All students	Every 20–30 min for K–5; every 45 min for 6–12
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	All students	School-wide expectations; consistent reinforcement
Visual supports and anchor charts displayed	All students	Accessible to all; referenced during instruction
Formative assessment and progress monitoring	All students	Weekly checks; data used to adjust instruction
Vocabulary pre-teaching before units	All students	Graphic organizer; visual + definition + example
Structured academic talk protocols	All students	Think-pair-share, numbered heads, partner talk
Culturally responsive teaching practices	All students	Inclusive materials; affirming classroom environment

◇ TIER 2 — Targeted Interventions (Some Students ~15%)

Targeted, small-group interventions for students who do not respond adequately to Tier 1 instruction. Typically 3–5 sessions per week in groups of 3–5 students.

Strategy / Intervention	Target Students	Implementation Notes
Small group reading intervention (evidence-based program)	Students below benchmark in reading	30 min/day, 3–5x/week; Tier 2 reading program
Small group math intervention (evidence-based program)	Students below benchmark in math	30 min/day, 3–5x/week; targeted skill focus
CICO (Check-In / Check-Out) behavioral support	Students with 2+ office referrals or teacher concerns	Daily mentor contact AM & PM; goal card used
Social skills group instruction	Students with social-emotional or peer challenges	Weekly; explicit instruction + role play
Explicit phonics instruction (Tier 2)	Students with decoding/phonemic awareness gaps	Orton-Gillingham or similar structured literacy
Fluency-building interventions (repeated reading)	Students with reading fluency below benchmark	Partner reading, reader's theater, recorded reading
Math fact fluency targeted practice	Students with automaticity gaps	Daily 5-min practice; visual supports
Structured writing support (sentence/paragraph frames)	Students with writing below grade level	Explicit modeling; gradual release of structure
Attendance monitoring and outreach	Students with chronic absenteeism	Family contact; incentive plan; barrier identification
Explicit vocabulary instruction in content areas	Students with language/vocabulary gaps	Tier 2 and Tier 3 words; visual vocab notebooks

◇ TIER 3 — Intensive Interventions (Few Students ~5%)

Individualized, intensive interventions for students who do not respond to Tier 1 or Tier 2 supports. May be delivered 1:1 or in very small groups (1–3 students). Tier 3 does NOT automatically mean special education.

Strategy / Intervention	Target Students	Implementation Notes
Intensive individualized reading intervention (diagnostic-driven)	Students significantly below benchmark	45–60 min/day; diagnostic assessment guides program
Intensive math intervention (individualized scope and sequence)	Students with significant math deficits	Daily; skill-by-skill mastery approach
Individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP)	Students with significant behavior impeding learning	FBA-based; positive strategies; team-developed
Individualized social-emotional learning plan	Students with significant social-emotional needs	Weekly counselor sessions; classroom support plan
Intensive oral language and vocabulary intervention	Students with language disorders or significant ELL needs	Speech-language pathologist consultation
Crisis prevention and de-escalation planning	Students with history of crisis episodes	Written plan; all staff trained; proactive strategies
Parent/family collaboration and home support plan	Students with persistent academic or behavioral challenges	Weekly contact; shared tracking tool; clear goals
Coordination with outside agencies (mental health, medical)	Students with significant mental health or medical needs	Release of information; treatment plan alignment
Consideration for special education evaluation	Students not responding to intensive Tier 3 supports	Document 6–8 weeks of Tier 3 data before referral
Individualized transition planning (high school)	Students approaching age 14 with significant needs	Post-secondary goals; vocational assessments

QUICK REFERENCE: IEP vs. 504 vs. RTI/MTSS

Side-by-side comparison for IEP team members and educators

	IEP	504 Plan	RTI / MTSS
Legal basis	IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)	Section 504, Rehabilitation Act	IDEA 2004 (part of evaluation process); ESEA
Who qualifies	Students with 1 of 13 disability categories affecting educational performance	Students with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity	All students (universal); targeted to non-responders
What it provides	Specially designed instruction + related services + accommodations	Accommodations only (no special ed services)	Tiered instructional supports and interventions
Who creates it	IEP Team (parents, gen ed, sped teacher, admin, student age 14+)	504 Team (school, parents; less formal)	General education team; MTSS committee
Reviewed / updated	Annually (required); every 3 years for re-evaluation	Annually (recommended); no federal mandate	Ongoing data review; 6–8 week intervention cycles
Placement	Least Restrictive Environment (LRE); may include pull-out services	General education only	General education; pull-out for Tier 2/3 only
Enforced by	Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) / State SEA	Office for Civil Rights (OCR)	State education agencies; school-level teams
Funded by	IDEA federal funding + state/local funds	General education funds	Title I, IDEA, general education funds
Cost to school	Significant (related services, evaluations, staffing)	Minimal (accommodations only)	Variable (intervention programs, staffing)

Common Misconceptions — Clarified

✗ MYTH: A student must fail before qualifying for an IEP or 504.

✓ **FACT: Students qualify based on documented disability and educational need — not on grades alone.**

✗ MYTH: RTI is only for students who may have learning disabilities.

✓ **FACT: RTI/MTSS supports ALL students, including those with behavioral, social-emotional, and English language needs.**

✗ MYTH: A 504 Plan is less serious than an IEP and doesn't need to be followed carefully.

✓ **FACT: Failure to implement a 504 Plan is a civil rights violation enforceable by the OCR.**

BERMED | IEPFOCUS.COM · © 2026 All Rights Reserved

This resource is for educational use only. Not legal advice. Always consult your district's special education guidelines.