

504

ACCOMMODATION BANK

ADHD Complete Guide

For Educators, Parents & 504 Teams

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2026 Edition

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Why ADHD Needs a 504 Plan, Not Just Good Intentions	3
What Is a 504 Plan for ADHD?.....	3
504 vs IEP: Which One for ADHD?	3
Who Is Eligible for a 504 with ADHD?	4
The Legal Foundation	4
The ADHD 504 Accommodation Bank.....	5
1. Attention and Focus	5
2. Executive Functioning and Organization.....	6
3. Testing and Assessment	7
4. Homework and Assignments.....	8
5. Sensory and Environment	9
6. Emotional Regulation and Behavior	10
7. Technology and Assistive Tools.....	11
8. Social and Communication.....	12
ADHD by Subtype: Targeted Accommodations	13
A Note on ADHD in Girls	13
A Note on AuDHD	13
Writing Strong ADHD 504 Goals: The BERMED F.O.C.U.S. Framework	14
Before and After: 10 Accommodation Rewrites	14
504 Meeting Scripts for ADHD.....	15
Scripts for Educators	15
Scripts for Parents.....	16
Scripts for Students (Self-Advocacy).....	16
Monitoring ADHD Accommodations: What Actually Works	17
The Monthly Check-In: 5 Questions	17
Weekly Accommodation Tracker.....	17
Red Flags: When to Call a 504 Review Meeting	18
Common Myths About ADHD and 504 Plans	19
Myth 1: "ADHD is just an excuse for laziness."	19
Myth 2: "If a student can focus on video games, their ADHD is not real."	19
Myth 3: "504 accommodations give ADHD students an unfair advantage."	19
Myth 4: "Boys have ADHD. Girls have anxiety."	19
Myth 5: "ADHD students will grow out of it."	20
Myth 6: "Medication is the only real solution."	20
Myth 7: "If a student does well sometimes, they do not really need a 504."	20
Myth 8: "The student just needs more discipline at home."	20
References	21

Why ADHD Needs a 504 Plan, Not Just Good Intentions

Here is a number that should stop you cold: roughly 50% of students with ADHD receive no formal academic support at school (CHADD, 2023). Not because their teachers do not care. Not because their parents are not trying. But because ADHD is still widely misread as a behavior problem, a motivation problem, or a parenting problem.

It is none of those things. ADHD is a neurological difference in how the brain manages attention, impulse control, and executive function. When a student with ADHD cannot sit still, loses assignments, or shuts down during a test, their brain is not being difficult. It is doing exactly what an ADHD brain does under conditions that were never designed for it.

A 504 Plan changes the conditions.

What Is a 504 Plan for ADHD?

A 504 Plan is a legal document under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits disability-based discrimination in any program receiving federal funding. For ADHD students, it provides a written set of accommodations that level the playing field without changing the curriculum or academic standards.

Unlike an IEP, a 504 does not require the student to be performing below grade level. It only requires that ADHD substantially limits a major life activity, which includes learning, concentrating, thinking, and reading.

PRO TIP

A 504 Plan does not lower the bar. It removes the obstacles the student was never supposed to be jumping over in the first place.

504 vs IEP: Which One for ADHD?

504 Plan	IEP (Individualized Education Program)
Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act	IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
Accommodations only (no curriculum changes)	Specialized instruction + accommodations
Eligible if ADHD substantially limits learning	Eligible if disability adversely affects education
No special education placement required	May involve special education services
Reviewed annually (recommended)	Reviewed annually (required by law)
Managed by general education team	Requires dedicated special education staff
Faster to obtain in most districts	More involved evaluation and planning process
Best for ADHD without academic gaps	Best for ADHD with significant academic impact

Who Is Eligible for a 504 with ADHD?

Eligibility does not require a formal ADHD diagnosis from a school psychologist, though documentation helps. A student qualifies if they have a physical or mental impairment (ADHD qualifies) that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Schools cannot require outside documentation, though many ask for it. Parents can request a 504 evaluation in writing at any time. Once a written request is submitted, the school is legally obligated to respond.

- ADHD-Inattentive Type: Often missed, especially in girls. Daydreaming, losing materials, inconsistent work quality.
- ADHD-Hyperactive-Impulsive Type: More visible. Difficulty staying seated, impulsive responses, frequent interruptions.
- ADHD Combined Type: Most common presentation. Both attention and hyperactivity-impulsivity affect daily functioning.
- AuDHD (Autism + ADHD): Increasingly identified. Unique support needs that blend both profiles.

The Legal Foundation

Section 504 (1973): Prohibits disability discrimination in federally funded programs. Schools must provide reasonable accommodations.

ADA Title II (1990): Extends protections and clarifies that ADHD meets the definition of a disability when it limits major life activities.

ADAAA (2008): Broadened the definition of disability, making it easier for ADHD students to qualify. Explicitly lists concentrating and thinking as protected activities.

PRO TIP

If a student has a private ADHD diagnosis and the school is hesitant to create a 504, cite the ADAAA directly. The law is on the family's side.

The ADHD 504 Accommodation Bank

This is the core of the guide. Over 120 accommodations, organized by domain, with the reasoning and the practical how-to. Do not treat this as a checklist. Treat it as a menu: select what fits this specific student, this specific classroom, this specific year.

1. Attention and Focus

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Preferential seating near the teacher or away from windows/doors	Reduces ambient distractions competing for limited attentional bandwidth	Assign a specific seat at the start of the year, revisit each semester
Frequent check-ins (every 10-15 minutes during independent work)	Brief re-engagement resets the attentional loop without shaming the student	Use a nonverbal signal (tap on desk, sticky note) to minimize disruption
Tasks broken into shorter chunks with clear stopping points	ADHD brains sustain focus in bursts. Long unbroken tasks deplete dopamine faster	Use a visual task strip: 3 mini-tasks instead of 1 large assignment
Extended time on all written assignments (1.5x or 2x)	Processing speed differences, not ability, cause slow output	Note in the 504: applies to all written work including classwork
Reduce number of problems (show mastery with 10, not 30)	Quality of understanding matters more than volume completed	Allow student to do odds only or teacher selects representative set
Highlight or color-code multi-step directions	ADHD working memory drops detail mid-task. Visual anchors compensate	Use a yellow highlighter on printed instructions before distributing
Visual timer displayed on desk or board	Externalizes time, which ADHD brains cannot reliably track internally	Time Timer app or physical Time Timer product works well
Movement breaks every 20-30 minutes	Physical movement resets the dopamine and norepinephrine balance needed for focus	Scheduled, not reactive. Student runs a note to the office, sharpens pencils
Minimize transitions without warning	ADHD brains struggle with task-switching without preparation time	Give 5-minute and 2-minute warnings before any transition
Allow doodling or fidget tools during instruction	Secondary motor activity actually improves focus for many ADHD brains	Approved tools only: fidget cube, stress ball, seated wobble cushion
Post daily agenda visibly and review it at class start	Reduces anxiety about the unknown and primes the brain for upcoming transitions	Same spot every day. Student photographs it with their phone if allowed
Seat away from high-traffic areas (doorways, pencil sharpener)	Every movement nearby costs attentional energy to filter out	Assess the classroom layout at the start of the year with ADHD in mind
Provide copy of teacher notes or guided notes outline	Simultaneous listening + writing overwhelms working memory	Notes uploaded to Google Classroom or emailed same day
Use a reading tracker or finger pointer for reading tasks	Line tracking errors are common when attention drifts mid-sentence	Simple card under the line works. Color overlays help some students
Allow student to listen to music during independent work	White noise or instrumental music can sharpen focus by masking irregular ambient sounds	Headphones allowed during seatwork only. No lyrics recommended

2. Executive Functioning and Organization

Executive functioning is where ADHD hits hardest. Planning, prioritizing, starting, and finishing tasks require a set of mental tools that ADHD disrupts at the neurological level. These accommodations are not about doing the work for the student. They are about making the process visible.

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Provide graphic organizers for all written tasks	Structures the pre-writing process, bypassing planning deficits	Have 3-4 generic templates ready: brainstorm, outline, compare-contrast
Assignment notebook checked by teacher or para weekly	Compensates for unreliable self-monitoring of task tracking	Can be digital (Google Keep, Notion) or paper. Consistent format matters
Break long-term projects into graded checkpoints	Eliminates time blindness by creating near-term deadlines with real stakes	Milestone 1 = topic, Milestone 2 = outline, Milestone 3 = draft, Final
Provide written and verbal instructions simultaneously	Reduces working memory load: student can re-read instead of having to remember	Post on LMS (Canvas, Schoology) the same moment you say it aloud
Color-coded binder or folder system by subject	Externalizes the organizational system the ADHD brain cannot generate independently	Consistent colors across all teachers in the grade reduces confusion
Weekly folder clean-out with teacher or counselor	Paper accumulation becomes an overwhelming barrier without regular reset	5 minutes on Fridays. No judgment. Just sort, staple, file, or toss
Use of a daily planner with model entries provided	Seeing what a complete planner entry looks like closes the skill gap	Teacher writes the first entry together with student each week
Checklists for recurring tasks (heading format, lab setup)	Reduces the number of decisions required each time	Laminate and tape to desk. Student checks off with dry-erase marker
Allow homework to be submitted via Google Classroom or email	Removes the transport step where many ADHD students lose completed work	A done assignment that stays done is worth the format flexibility
Priority list support: teacher helps student identify top 3 tasks	ADHD makes all tasks feel equally urgent or equally avoidable	3x5 card at start of work period: what are the three things to finish today
Locker or desk organizational template provided	Visual model reduces the cognitive load of self-organizing a physical space	Photo of ideal locker posted inside locker door
Reduce homework load or allow alternative completion formats	Homework compliance is lower for ADHD due to transition-to-home difficulties, not laziness	Consider: quality over quantity, or allow oral responses
Parent communication log shared via email or app	Keeps all stakeholders aligned without relying on the student as messenger	ClassDojo, Remind, or shared Google Doc works for most families
Teach and model self-monitoring tools explicitly	Organization skills are taught, not assumed. ADHD students need direct instruction	Use the STOP-CHECK-GO routine before submitting any work
Allow use of sticky notes for quick reminders on desk	Externalizes short-term memory tasks that working memory cannot hold	Color-coded: pink = urgent, yellow = today, blue = this week

3. Testing and Assessment

The standard testing environment was designed for neurotypical processing. For ADHD students, it stacks every challenge into one high-stakes window: sustained attention, time management, impulse control, working memory. These accommodations do not make the test easier. They make it fair.

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Extended time (1.5x or 2x) on all formal assessments	Processing speed is consistently lower in ADHD, independent of knowledge	Must be noted in the 504 with the specific multiplier. Default to 1.5x
Testing in a separate, reduced-distraction environment	Removes the auditory and visual noise that drains attentional capacity mid-test	Small group (6 or fewer) or 1:1 room. Regular testing room defeats the purpose
Frequent breaks during long assessments (every 20-30 min)	Allows attentional reset without losing test-taking momentum	Pre-scheduled, not on demand. Break = stand, stretch, water. Not a phone
Test questions read aloud or audio-recorded version provided	Reading and comprehending simultaneously overwhelms working memory	Particularly important for reading-heavy content-area tests (science, social studies)
Scribe or speech-to-text for written responses	Transcription drains executive resources needed for content production	Dragon Naturally Speaking, Google Voice Typing, or a human scribe
Allow scratch paper and graphic organizers during tests	Offloads working memory onto paper, freeing processing for content retrieval	Pre-printed organizer for essay questions. Scratch paper for math
Chunked test format (one section at a time, student paces)	Prevents the visual overwhelm of a multi-page test seen all at once	Fold or staple in sections. Student completes one, then receives the next
Directions re-read or clarified individually as needed	Impulsive test-starting often means directions were not fully processed	Check in after first 5 minutes to confirm student understood task
Allow oral responses as an alternative to written answers	Bypasses transcription deficit to assess actual content knowledge	One-on-one oral exam or recorded voice memo response
Calculator permitted for math tests assessing concepts (not computation)	Removes arithmetic as a confound when the target skill is problem-solving	Specify in 504 which assessments this applies to
Test scheduled at optimal time of day (when medication is active)	ADHD medication efficacy peaks at specific times. Test timing matters	Coordinate with parents and school nurse to identify peak window
Allow student to type responses instead of handwriting	Handwriting requires significant executive control and motor coordination	Chromebook or iPad with keyboard. Spell-check permitted unless assessing spelling
No penalty for answer changes or crossing out	Impulse-driven first responses often need revision. Penalizing discourages self-correction	State explicitly in instructions: crossing out and rewriting is acceptable
Review test format in advance (sample questions or practice test)	Reduces test-day uncertainty, which spikes anxiety and reduces performance	One practice test session per semester minimum
Allow movement between test sections (stand, walk to bin, return)	Positional change resets attentional arousal. Seat-bound testing is harder for ADHD	Designated movement moment between each test section

4. Homework and Assignments

Homework is where many ADHD students fall apart, not because they do not understand the material, but because the transition from school to home strips away every environmental support that was holding them together. These accommodations address the structural problem, not the student.

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Reduced homework quantity (quality over quantity)	Cognitive fatigue after school day is real. Less, completed well, beats more, abandoned	Agree on a maximum homework time (e.g., 30 min) with family upfront
Accept late work without grade penalty (within agreed window)	Time blindness, not laziness, causes late submissions in ADHD	Define the window in the 504: e.g., up to 3 days late for full credit
Allow alternative assignment formats (video, poster, oral)	Different output modes can bypass the transcription barrier entirely	Student proposes format, teacher approves. Rubric applies to all formats equally
Homework posted online by 3pm each school day	Removes the lost-assignment-notebook variable entirely	Canvas, Schoology, Google Classroom, or class website. No exceptions
Assignment due dates communicated minimum 3 days in advance	Planning buffer compensates for time blindness and delayed task initiation	Post on class calendar AND write on board AND say aloud. Three channels
Study guide provided for all major tests	Reduces open-ended preparation which ADHD students do not self-generate effectively	Study guide available one week before. Review session offered but not required
Allow homework completion in resource room or library before school ends	Removes the problematic home-to-school transition for submitted work	Check-in with support teacher. Work submitted digitally or placed in folder
Parent notified of missing assignments within 24 hours	Early notification prevents hole from becoming a crater	Automated LMS alerts or direct teacher email. Never wait until report card
Break large projects into weekly sub-tasks with individual due dates	Each sub-deadline creates a near-term motivator the ADHD brain can respond to	Publish the full project rubric with sub-task dates on day of assignment
Allow student to dictate homework responses to a family member	Verbal processing is often stronger than written. Transcription is the barrier	Note in 504 that oral dictation to a scribe counts as independent work
Reduce reading-for-homework volume or allow audiobook substitution	Evening reading is a high-failure task when ADHD medication has worn off	Audible, Learning Ally, or teacher-recorded audio notes are all valid
Acknowledge partial completion as progress, not failure	All-or-nothing grading punishes executive dysfunction, not lack of knowledge	Award proportional credit for work completed. Incomplete beats not submitted
Provide assignment planner template with time estimates	ADHD students cannot reliably estimate task duration. External estimates help	Teacher includes estimated time on each assignment: "This should take 15 min"
Check for understanding before student leaves class	Prevents the student arriving home with no idea what the homework actually is	Thumbs up before the bell. Or student reads the assignment back aloud
Establish a homework partner or study buddy system	Social accountability is a powerful ADHD motivator. Partners provide structure	Rotate partners. Pair for check-in, not for doing the work together

5. Sensory and Environment

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Flexible seating options (standing desk, wobble chair, floor cushion)	Allows body movement that maintains focus without disrupting others	Create a designated flexible seating zone. Student chooses independently
Noise-canceling headphones or earplugs during independent work	Filters irregular ambient noise that the ADHD brain cannot automatically ignore	Student-owned or class set. Establish a signal for when they are appropriate
Reduced visual clutter around student work area	Visual stimuli compete for limited attentional resources	Clear the area 3 feet around the student's desk. Less is genuinely more
Permission to use a sensory tool kit (fidget, putty, textured pad)	Low-intensity motor activity enhances focus rather than competing with it	Approved kit in student's desk. Not available as a reward, but as a tool
Access to a quiet work space for high-demand tasks	Some tasks require a distraction-free environment the main room cannot provide	Library carrel, empty room, or divider in the classroom. Student self-selects
Classroom near exits or bathrooms (reduces transition disruption)	Long hallway walks increase the odds of distraction and off-task behavior	Consider room assignment at the scheduling stage, not after problems arise
Temperature and lighting comfort accommodations	Sensory discomfort competes with available attention. Comfort extends focus window	Allow a sweater, adjust lighting if possible, seat away from vents
Minimize sudden loud noises or flashing lights during instruction	Startle response in ADHD is higher. Recovery takes attentional resources	Warn students before fire drills. Provide advance notice for assemblies
Allow snack during class (especially late morning or afternoon)	Blood sugar fluctuations worsen ADHD symptoms. Regular fuel stabilizes focus	Keep it non-disruptive: small, quiet snack. Water bottle always allowed
Access to a movement break space within or near the classroom	A sanctioned movement zone reduces the need for disruptive movement	Hallway spot, classroom corner, or physical classroom setup with a "break chair"
Reduce paper clutter on student desk (one subject at a time)	Multiple visible materials fragment attention across tasks	Materials for current task only. Rest stored in folder out of sight
Provide a visual daily schedule posted in consistent location	Predictability reduces anxiety that compounds ADHD symptoms	Same spot every day. Changes announced verbally and noted on schedule
Allow standing during instruction if it helps focus	Some ADHD students regulate better when not required to stay seated	Standing mat or designated standing spot at the back or side of the room
Ensure workspace has adequate personal space from peers	Proximity to active or talkative peers is a significant distraction source	Leave one empty seat buffer if possible during independent work
Dim overhead fluorescent lighting or allow desk lamp use	Fluorescent lighting is a known sensory irritant, especially for ADHD and AuDHD students	Warm desk lamp or natural light. Can make a significant comfort difference

6. Emotional Regulation and Behavior

ADHD is not a behavior disorder. But ADHD affects emotional regulation as surely as it affects attention. The frustration, shame, and self-doubt that build up in undertreated ADHD students show up as behavior. These accommodations address the root, not the symptom.

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Nonverbal check-in system (color card, emoji chart)	Allows self-reporting without the social exposure of verbal disclosure	Laminated 3-zone card (green/yellow/red) on desk. Student flips it privately
Access to a calm-down corner or regulation space	A designated de-escalation spot prevents behavior from becoming a crisis	Corner with sensory items, breathing poster. Not used as punishment
Private, not public, redirection when off-task	Public correction activates shame, which shuts down ADHD executive function entirely	Walk by, kneel down, quiet voice. Never call out across the room
Co-created behavior agreement (student writes their own plan)	Agency and authorship dramatically increase ADHD students' buy-in to behavioral plans	Student drafts: "When I feel overwhelmed I will..." Teacher co-signs
Pre-correction before transitions or difficult tasks	Brief verbal preview activates the prefrontal cortex before the challenge begins	"In 5 minutes we are starting the test. Remember: read each question twice."
Frequent, specific positive feedback (not just praise)	ADHD brains respond strongly to immediate reinforcement. Specific feedback lands harder	Not "good job" but "I noticed you re-read that question before answering"
Avoid removing recess or physical activity as a consequence	Movement is a neurological need for ADHD students, not a privilege	State this explicitly in the 504. Recess is a regulation tool, not a reward
Greet student by name at door each morning	Positive first contact sets the emotional tone for the entire day	10-second investment. Enormous return on student engagement and trust
Allow student to leave class for a brief reset (2-3 minutes)	Short voluntary exit prevents emotional escalation from reaching crisis level	Simple signal agreed in advance. Student goes to designated spot, returns
Reduce confrontational language ("You need to..." vs "Can you help me...")	Oppositional escalation in ADHD is often triggered by perceived power struggle	Reframe commands as choices: "Would you rather start with math or reading?"
Restorative conversation after incidents, not punitive isolation	Punishment without connection worsens ADHD behavior patterns long term	5-minute check-in: what happened, what did you need, what will help next time
Recognize stress triggers and adjust demands proactively	Anticipating a student's difficult moments prevents the behavior cascade	Monday mornings, post-lunch, test days. Reduce new demands in those windows
Connect student with a trusted adult check-in person each day	One reliable relationship is a research-backed buffer against ADHD behavior escalation	2-minute daily check-in with counselor, assistant, or favorite teacher
Avoid negative charting in front of peers (visible sticker charts)	Public tracking of failures increases shame without improving behavior	Private logs only. Progress shared with student 1:1
Allow student to request a replacement task when completely dysregulated	Forcing a task during shutdown produces nothing. Offering choice resets the system	"I can see you need a minute. Do you want to try the next problem or take a break?"

7. Technology and Assistive Tools

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Text-to-speech software for all reading tasks (Speechify, NaturalReader)	Bypasses decoding load, allows focus on comprehension	Pre-install on school device. Student practices before it is needed on a test
Speech-to-text for written responses (Dragon, Google Voice)	Removes transcription as a barrier to demonstrating knowledge	Test in quiet space. Student proofreads the transcription before submitting
Digital graphic organizers (Google Docs templates, Canva)	Combines organizational structure with preferred digital medium	Teacher creates a shared template folder. Student duplicates as needed
Calculator allowed on non-computation math assessments	Removes arithmetic execution from working memory during conceptual tasks	Clarify in 504 which assessments allow it. Graphing vs basic calculator matters
Audio recordings of lessons or teacher instructions	Creates a replayable reference that bypasses auditory working memory limits	Post to Google Classroom or share via Loom. No need to re-record individually
Task management app for homework and deadlines (Todoist, Google Tasks)	Digital reminders compensate for weak internal time-monitoring	Show the student how to use it. Set recurring alerts 24 hours before due dates
Audiobook access for all novel or textbook reading (Learning Ally, Audible)	Decouples reading comprehension from visual tracking and line management	Learning Ally requires a qualifying profile. Many schools have accounts
Tablet or laptop for note-taking instead of handwriting	Typing is faster for most ADHD students, reducing transcription-induced cognitive overload	Google Keep or OneNote syncs across devices for access at home
Closed captioning on all video content	Multi-modal delivery improves attention anchoring during instructional videos	Turn on by default. No need for the student to request it each time
Timer apps on device during independent work (Forest, Be Focused)	External time structure compensates for the internal time blindness of ADHD	Forest gamifies focus in a way that is inherently motivating for many ADHD students
Screen reader for all digital assessments	Ensures reading level is not the barrier on content assessments	Built into most devices: NVDA, VoiceOver, Chromebook Select-to-Speak
Word prediction software for writing tasks (Co-Writer, Ghotit)	Reduces the mental search for words during composition, maintaining writing flow	Particularly helpful for students with combined ADHD and dyslexia or language delays
Digital sticky note reminders on device home screen	Puts the most important daily reminders where the student will actually see them	Teacher or parent sets up at start of week. Student reviews each morning
Email or text alerts for upcoming deadlines from teacher/LMS	Automated external reminders replace the unreliable internal reminder system	Canvas, Schoology, and Google Classroom all have configurable notification settings
Access to spell-check and grammar tools on all writing tasks	Spelling and grammar errors are not indicators of content mastery in ADHD	Grammarly, built-in word processor tools. State explicitly in 504 when it applies

8. Social and Communication

Accommodation	Why It Works for ADHD Brains	Quick Implementation
Rehearsal before class presentations (private practice with teacher)	Reduces performance anxiety that compounds ADHD's impulsive verbal tendencies	10-minute private run-through. Identifies the moments where the student struggles
Alternative presentation formats (recorded video, slideshow, poster)	Removes live performance demand while maintaining content assessment	Student submits recorded presentation via Flipgrid or Loom
Small group work with pre-assigned roles	Unstructured group work is a challenge for ADHD: defined roles reduce conflict	Assign the role that matches the student's strength: presenter, researcher, designer
Pre-warning before being called on in class discussion	Cold-calling triggers freeze response in many ADHD students	A simple nod or pre-agreed signal before calling on the student
Social skills coaching embedded in IEP check-ins (if available)	Some ADHD students struggle with turn-taking and reading social cues	Not always available via 504. Can be addressed through counseling referral
Peer buddy support during unstructured times (lunch, transition)	Unstructured time is high-risk for ADHD social difficulties	Organic pairing works best. Forced buddies tend to backfire
Explicit instruction in reading nonverbal cues during group work	Impulsivity affects social timing. Explicit teaching compensates for missed cues	Short social skills lesson embedded in classroom community time
Conflict resolution script provided for common social situations	Having words ready reduces the impulsive reaction in the moment	Laminated card: "When I feel frustrated I can say..." 3 sentence starters
Quiet space available during lunch for sensory or social recovery	Cafeteria overwhelm is real for ADHD and AuDHD students. Permission to decompress	Library, classroom with a teacher, or hallway bench. Student self-selects
Teacher advocate present at restorative conferences	ADHD students often lack the self-advocacy language for conflict situations	Trusted adult in the room translates the student's experience fairly

ADHD by Subtype: Targeted Accommodations

One of the most common 504 mistakes: giving every ADHD student the same plan. The Inattentive student who daydreams her way through class needs fundamentally different support than the Combined-type student bouncing off the walls. And the AuDHD student needs both, plus something else entirely.

Subtype	Key Classroom Challenges	Often Missed Because...	Priority Accommodations
ADHD Inattentive	Zoning out, losing materials, inconsistent work quality, slow to start tasks	She is quiet. He seems lazy. They look fine on the outside.	Preferential seating, frequent private check-ins, written directions, extended time, reduced homework, audiobooks
ADHD Hyperactive-Impulsive	Calling out, leaving seat, difficulty waiting, impulsive decisions, emotional reactivity	Seen as a behavior problem rather than a neurological difference	Movement breaks, flexible seating, pre-correction, nonverbal redirect, immediate specific feedback, calm-down space
ADHD Combined	Both attention and hyperactivity challenges. Highly variable day-to-day performance	Inconsistency is misread as lack of effort or manipulation	Full accommodation bank. Medication timing important. Daily check-in essential
AuDHD (Autism + ADHD)	Sensory overload compounds focus problems. Social scripts conflict with impulse. Demand avoidance layer.	Each condition masks the other. Often diagnosed late or misdiagnosed as anxiety only	All ADHD accommodations plus: predictable routines, sensory accommodations, processing time, PDA-informed demand framing, flexible deadlines

A Note on ADHD in Girls

The ADHD research base was built primarily on hyperactive boys. Girls with ADHD, particularly the Inattentive type, are diagnosed 3-5 years later on average (Quinn & Madhoo, 2014). By the time they receive support, many have already developed anxiety, perfectionism, and internalized shame as secondary conditions.

The result: girls with ADHD often appear to be coping, because they have worked twice as hard to appear that way. Their 504 plans need to address not just the academic accommodations, but the emotional load of masking.

PRO TIP

For inattentive girls, ask: "Where do you feel most overwhelmed in the school day?" The answer is usually not the class where the most symptoms appear, it is the class where she is working the hardest to hold it together.

A Note on AuDHD

AuDHD is not just autism plus ADHD. The two conditions interact in ways that can amplify both sets of challenges. Autistic demand avoidance combined with ADHD impulsivity creates a profile that does not respond well to standard behavior management approaches.

AuDHD students need 504 accommodations that are flexible by design, predictable in structure, and never framed as punishment. Their support plan should explicitly note the AuDHD profile and include a section on how adults should communicate demands to reduce PDA-related shutdown.

Writing Strong ADHD 504 Goals: The BERMED F.O.C.U.S. Framework

Most 504 accommodation statements are vague to the point of uselessness. "Extended time as needed" means nothing without a specific multiplier. "Preferential seating" is open to interpretation by every teacher in the building. Strong 504 language is specific, observable, and not subject to individual interpretation. Use the BERMED F.O.C.U.S. framework when writing or reviewing any ADHD 504 accommodation:

F.O.C.U.S. Letter	What It Means
F - Functional	States what the student can and cannot do, not what they should or should not do
O - Observable	Describes something that can be seen, measured, or verified
C - Consistent	Applies in all settings unless specifically noted otherwise
U - Understood by all	Clear enough that a substitute teacher can implement it correctly
S - Specific	Includes the exact accommodation, setting, and conditions

Before and After: 10 Accommodation Rewrites

Before	After (BERMED F.O.C.U.S. - Use This)
Extended time as needed	Student receives 1.5x extended time on all timed assessments and standardized tests. This applies in all subject areas and is documented on each test cover sheet by the proctor.
Preferential seating	Student is seated in the front row, center section, away from doorways, windows, and high-traffic areas. Seat assignment is reviewed at the start of each semester.
Frequent breaks	Student may take a 3-minute movement break every 25 minutes during extended independent work. Break is student-initiated using an agreed nonverbal signal (standing up).
Reduced homework	Student completes 50% of assigned homework problems. Teacher designates which problems to complete, ensuring content coverage. All assignments are posted to Google Classroom by 3pm.
Assistance with organization	Teacher or para checks student planner every Friday during advisory period. Any missing assignments are noted in a shared Google Doc accessible to the parent.
Quiet testing environment	Student takes all formal assessments in a small-group room with 6 or fewer students. This includes unit tests, quizzes longer than 15 minutes, and all standardized assessments.
Use of technology	Student uses a Chromebook with speech-to-text for all written responses of more than 3 sentences. Student proofreads using read-aloud before submitting. Applies to all classwork and assessments.
Check for understanding	Teacher performs a private check-in with the student within the first 5 minutes of any independent work period to confirm task is understood. Check-in is nonverbal (thumbs up/down).
Positive reinforcement	Teacher provides specific, private positive feedback at least twice per class period for observed on-task behavior or task completion. Public praise is avoided per student preference.
Movement allowed	Student may stand at their desk during instruction or independent work. Classroom has a designated standing mat at the back. Student transitions between sitting and standing independently.

504 Meeting Scripts for ADHD

Most 504 meetings go sideways not because of bad intentions, but because people do not have the words ready. Teachers do not know how to propose an accommodation without it sounding like they are labeling the student. Parents do not know how to push back without sounding adversarial. And students almost never know how to speak for themselves.

These scripts are direct, professional, and grounded in the student's needs, not in frustration or defensiveness.

Scripts for Educators

SCRIPT

Proposing an accommodation in a meeting: "I have noticed that [student] consistently loses steam about 20 minutes into any independent task. This is not a motivation issue. What I am seeing is a focus window that is shorter than the task requires. I would like to add a scheduled movement break every 25 minutes as a proactive support."

SCRIPT

Responding to a parent who feels the plan is not working: "I hear you, and I appreciate you flagging this. Let's look at which specific accommodations are being used consistently and which ones might need adjustment. Can you tell me which part of the day is most difficult at home? That will help us figure out where the gap is."

SCRIPT

Requesting a 504 review when needs have changed: "Based on what I am seeing this year, I think [student]'s plan needs to be updated. Their needs in [area] have shifted, and the current accommodations are not addressing the full picture. I would like to request a team meeting to revise the plan before the end of the semester."

SCRIPT

Communicating with a resistant colleague: "I know the extended time accommodation adds an extra step on test days. I want to make sure we are all implementing it consistently because it is legally required under the 504. Can we figure out a system that works for both of us without creating extra burden?"

Scripts for Parents

SCRIPT

Requesting a 504 evaluation in writing: "I am writing to formally request an evaluation to determine whether my child qualifies for a 504 Plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. My child has a diagnosis of ADHD that significantly affects their ability to concentrate, complete assignments, and manage time at school. Please let me know the timeline and process for this evaluation."

SCRIPT

Pushing back when a teacher is not implementing the 504: "I want to address a concern I have about the extended time accommodation in your class. My child has mentioned that it has not been available on recent quizzes. I understand things get busy, but this accommodation is a legal requirement. Can we talk about how to make sure it is consistently in place going forward?"

SCRIPT

Requesting a specific accommodation be added: "I would like to propose adding audio-recorded instructions to [student]'s 504. At home I have noticed that when directions are only given verbally, they are often lost by the time she gets to the task. Having access to a recording would mean she is not relying on memory alone. Is there a way to build this into her plan?"

Scripts for Students (Self-Advocacy)

Teaching students to speak for themselves is one of the most powerful interventions in a 504. These scripts are written for middle and high school students and can be practiced in advance.

SCRIPT

Asking for the extended time accommodation: "I have extended time on my 504 Plan. Can we set up a time for me to take this test in the small group room? I work better without distractions and I need the extra time to do my best."

SCRIPT

Explaining ADHD to a new teacher: "I have ADHD. It means I sometimes have a hard time staying focused or keeping track of assignments, not because I don't care, but because my brain works differently. My 504 Plan has some supports that really help me. Can we go over it together?"

SCRIPT

Asking for a movement break: "I am starting to lose focus and I think I need a short break. Is it okay if I take 3 minutes to stand and stretch? I have this on my plan and I will come right back."

Monitoring ADHD Accommodations: What Actually Works

A 504 Plan is not a document you file in September and revisit in June. ADHD needs change across the school year, across grades, and as medication or life circumstances shift. A monitoring system does not have to be elaborate. It has to be consistent.

The Monthly Check-In: 5 Questions

Once a month, someone on the team, ideally the student's primary teacher or counselor, should answer these five questions:

- Which accommodations are being used consistently across all settings?
- Which accommodations have not been implemented in the past month?
- Has the student's performance on tests, homework, or participation changed?
- Has the student said anything about what is or is not working?
- Are there new stressors (change at home, new class, medication change) that need to be factored in?

Weekly Accommodation Tracker

Accommodation	Implemented This Week? Notes
Extended time (1.5x) on assessments	
Preferential seating confirmed	
Movement breaks provided (2 per class block)	
Written directions posted on LMS by 3pm	
Planner check-in completed (Friday)	
Private, not public, redirection used	
Check-in with trusted adult completed	
Parent communication sent if missing assignments	
Testing in small group room arranged	
Technology tools accessible and functioning	

Red Flags: When to Call a 504 Review Meeting

A 504 meeting can be requested at any time by the parent, teacher, or student. Do not wait for the annual review if any of these signs appear:

- Grades dropping more than one letter grade in two or more subjects
- Student refusing to attend school or expressing significant distress about school
- Medication change that affects alertness, mood, or appetite significantly
- Teacher reporting that accommodations are not being used because they are not practical
- Student advancing to a new school (elementary to middle, middle to high)
- New diagnosis added (anxiety, depression, AuDHD, learning disability)
- Parent reporting that homework is taking more than 90 minutes nightly
- Student self-reporting that nothing on the plan is helping

PRO TIP

Annual reviews are the legal minimum, not the gold standard. High-functioning ADHD students often need a mid-year check-in at minimum. Build it into the 504 document itself: "Plan reviewed in January and June."

Common Myths About ADHD and 504 Plans

These myths are not just wrong. They actively delay support for students who need it. Every one of these has been said in a real 504 meeting. Every one of them can be addressed directly, calmly, and with evidence.

Myth 1: "ADHD is just an excuse for laziness."

MYTH

ADHD is just an excuse for laziness.

REALITY

ADHD involves real neurological differences in dopamine regulation and prefrontal cortex function. The research is unambiguous. What looks like laziness is often the exhaustion of compensating for a brain that requires three times the effort to do what comes automatically to others.

Myth 2: "If a student can focus on video games, their ADHD is not real."

MYTH

If a student can focus on video games, their ADHD is not real.

REALITY

ADHD is not a focus deficit, it is a regulation deficit. The ADHD brain can hyperfocus on high-dopamine activities like gaming. That same brain cannot sustain attention on low-stimulation tasks like reading textbooks. Both are symptoms of the same condition.

Myth 3: "504 accommodations give ADHD students an unfair advantage."

MYTH

504 accommodations give ADHD students an unfair advantage.

REALITY

A 504 Plan removes a disadvantage, it does not create an advantage. A student with ADHD taking a test without extended time is competing at a disadvantage. Equitable is not the same as equal.

Myth 4: "Boys have ADHD. Girls have anxiety."

MYTH

Boys have ADHD. Girls have anxiety.

REALITY

Girls are diagnosed with ADHD at significantly lower rates, not because they have it less, but because they present differently. Inattentive ADHD in girls is chronically underidentified. Many are first diagnosed with anxiety or depression before the underlying ADHD is recognized.

Myth 5: "ADHD students will grow out of it."

MYTH

ADHD students will grow out of it.

REALITY

For approximately 60-70% of individuals, ADHD symptoms persist into adulthood (Faraone et al., 2021). Even those whose hyperactivity decreases continue to experience executive functioning challenges. Early support is an investment in long-term outcomes, not a temporary fix.

Myth 6: "Medication is the only real solution."

MYTH

Medication is the only real solution.

REALITY

Medication is one tool in a larger toolbox. Accommodations, environmental modifications, skill-building, and family support all produce measurable outcomes independent of medication. Many students thrive on accommodations alone.

Myth 7: "If a student does well sometimes, they do not really need a 504."

MYTH

If a student does well sometimes, they do not really need a 504.

REALITY

Inconsistency is a hallmark of ADHD, not evidence against it. Good days reflect optimal conditions, not the absence of ADHD. A 504 creates conditions that make good days more frequent.

Myth 8: "The student just needs more discipline at home."

MYTH

The student just needs more discipline at home.

REALITY

ADHD is not a parenting outcome. Parenting style does not cause ADHD, and stricter discipline does not resolve executive dysfunction. Blaming family dynamics is a delay tactic that harms students.

References

The following sources informed the content, accommodations, and legal framework in this guide. All are publicly accessible.

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