



# Teaching Students with Medical/Mobility Impairments

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The Ohio State University Partnership Grant

*Improving the Quality of Education for Students with Disabilities*

## Description

Mobility impairments are often due to conditions such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury. Students may use crutches, braces, or a wheelchair, and in a few instances, may be accompanied to class by a round-the-clock nurse. Medical impairments are often invisible disabilities, caused by such conditions as arthritis, asthma, cancer, orthopedic limitations, post surgery, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, or seizure disorder. The student may have limited energy; difficulty walking, standing, or sitting for a long time; or other disabling characteristics, such as an inability to write.

Functional limitations may be episodic for some students who may experience dizziness, disorientation, and difficulty breathing during a recurrence. For example, with asthma or a seizure disorder, a student may have periods when they function without any accommodations, but at other times their functional limitations are quite severe.

Even with the same disability, students with mobility or medical impairments may have a wide variety of characteristics. For example, persons who have experienced a spinal cord injury are likely to show differing degrees of limitation. They may require different types of class accommodations or may need no accommodations, depending upon functional limitations.

## Guidelines

**Exam Accommodations:** Students who have upper body limitations who are unable to use their hands will likely need exam accommodations. These accommodations may include extended time, a scribe, or voice recognition software. Assist the student in coordinating these accommodations with the Office for Disability Services (ODS).

**Access to Class Notes:** Students who are unable to use their hands may need assistance in finding a note taker, or they may elect to tape record lectures.

**Tardiness:** Some students are unable to quickly get from one location to another due to architectural barriers or difficulty in using adaptive transportation. The transportation system is influenced by traffic, weather, and scheduling problems. For these reasons, a student may be late getting to class. Please be patient when this happens.

The entire Fast Facts series is available at: <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/>



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**Seating Arrangements:** In a few situations, a student may be unable to use the type of chair provided in a particular classroom. ODS will assist the student in making special seating arrangements.

**Inaccessible Classroom:** If your classroom is inaccessible and a student is unable to get into your classroom, your class location must be moved to an accessible location. Call ODS immediately for assistance in getting your class location changed.

**Laboratory Courses:** Some students may need assistance for laboratory courses. These students may need to be paired with an able-bodied student or a teaching assistant. Consult ODS if you need assistance in making these arrangements. A student using a wheelchair may need a lower lab table to accommodate the wheelchair.

**Missed Exams or Classes:** Some students experience recurrence of a chronic condition requiring bed rest and/or hospitalization. These students need extra time to complete incomplete work and the opportunity to make up tests. Other arrangements may be necessary if a student misses a class excessively due to a disability and is unable to make up the essential requirements of the class. In either situation, it is essential not to penalize a student for his/her disability and at the same time maintain the integrity of the requirements of the class.

**Field Trips:** Make arrangements for field trips or other out of classroom experiences as soon as possible so that all students are able to experience all class teaming opportunities. Consult with ODS about arrangements if you need assistance.

## Considerations for Teaching All Students with Disabilities

**Universal Design for Learning:** “Universal design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting.” (Visit <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/> for more information.) By incorporating Universal Design principles in instruction that allow students with disabilities access to the classroom, you may also be designing instruction that works better for everyone in the class. Classes designed with this concept in mind offer a variety of methods of content presentation, flexible teaching strategies, and options for demonstrating mastery of course content.

**Expectations:** Although many students with disabilities need accommodations, expect these students to perform at a level commensurate with their peers. Do not have a special grading scale or other criteria for them.

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**Guided Notes on the Web:** Providing students with guided notes that they can access through the Web prior to class assists them with focusing on the appropriate material. It will help them to learn more effectively in the classroom as well as take better notes.

(Visit <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/>)

**Web-Enhanced Learning:** If classroom materials are available on the Web, check with the Web Accessibility Center (WAC) to ensure that the web format is compatible with adaptive technology.

(Visit [www.wac.ohio-state.edu/](http://www.wac.ohio-state.edu/) or <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/>)

**Comprehensive Syllabus:** A comprehensive syllabus with clearly delineated statements about expectation is helpful to students who need help with structure and organization.

(Visit <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/>)

**Inappropriate Behavior:** Students with disabilities are subject to the same code of conduct required of any student at Ohio State. If there are incidences of inappropriate behavior, meet privately to discuss issues of behavior and encourage students to seek help. Give concise and honest feedback about behaviors that are inappropriate. If there are situations involving threats or abusive behavior, call the University Police. If the student is so disruptive that he/she prevents you from effectively teaching your class, call Student Judicial Affairs. You are always welcome to consult with ODS. These situations are not likely to occur, but it is wise to have a plan.

### Remember...

It's your responsibility to support Ohio State's commitment to equal access to education. This information will assist you when you have students with disabilities in your class; staff at the Office for Disability Services are also available to help you. Some key elements are:

- ◆ **Alternative Format:** Many students need print materials in alternative format (scanned to disks, audio tapes, Braille, or enlarged). Work *quickly* with ODS and the student to make sure students get materials converted in a timely fashion.
- ◆ **Verification of a Disability:** If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with a letter. ODS produces these letters only for students who are registered with this office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file.
- ◆ **Class Notes:** Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. They may need your assistance in getting a volunteer note taker, or you may provide them a copy of your notes and/or copies of overheads and other class materials.
- ◆ **Proctor Sheets:** A student with a disability may ask you to complete a proctor sheet, a form that facilitates the administration of your tests with accommodations at ODS. It is essential for you to fill the form out *completely and quickly* so that arrangements can be made for exam accommodations.



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### Resources

The Ohio State University Partnership Grant Website:

<http://www.telr.osu.edu/dpg/>

The Ohio State University Office for Disability Services (ODS) Website:

<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

The Ohio State University Web Accessibility Center Website:

<http://www.wac.ohio-state.edu/>

The Ohio State University Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator's Office Website:

<http://ada.osu.edu/>

The entire Fast Facts series is available at: <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/>

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