



## Differences Between Accommodations and Modifications

Although there is nothing in federal law or regulation that differentiates between **accommodations** and **modifications**, there is general agreement that these words mean two different things in the special education context. It is important to understand the differences between **accommodations** and **modifications** so that you can be fully informed and an equal participant in the development and implementation of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). It is also important to recognize the difference, because major curriculum **modifications** may have implications for your child's graduation plan.

**Accommodations** allow a student to learn the same material, but in a different way.

**Modifications** change what a student is taught or expected to learn.

	Accommodations	Modifications
Classroom instruction	<p><b>Accommodations</b> can help students learn the same material as their peers. This allows them to meet the same expectations.</p> <p>A student with dyslexia, for example, might listen to an audio version of a book. But it is still the same book that the rest of the class is reading. Likewise, a student who has trouble focusing might get seated next to the teacher, but still has to do all the regular class assignments.</p>	<p>Students who are far behind their peers may need changes to the curriculum they are learning. These are called <b>modifications</b>.</p> <p>For example, a student could be assigned shorter or easier reading assignments, or homework that is different from the rest of the class. Students who receive modifications are <i>not</i> expected to learn the same material as their classmates.</p>



	Accommodations	Modifications
Classroom tests	<p><b>Accommodations</b> for testing can be different from those used for teaching.</p> <p>For example, using spell-check might help a student with writing difficulties take notes during class. However, it would not be appropriate during a weekly spelling test. At the same time, this student might benefit from having extra time to complete the spelling test or using a keyboard if the physical act of writing is difficult.</p>	<p><b>Modifications</b> in testing often mean that a student covers less material—or material that is less complex.</p> <p>For example, a spelling test may require the class to study 20 words. However, a student with modifications might only have to study 10 of them. Or there might be two different lists of spelling words with different levels of difficulty. With a modification, <i>what</i> the student is tested on is different.</p>
Standardized testing	<p>Statewide tests allow some <b>accommodations</b> like extra time or taking a test on a computer. It is best if these are the same accommodations a child uses to take class tests.</p>	<p>Some students take what is called an <u>alternative assessment</u>. This state test includes <b>modifications</b> to the regular test. Questions might cover less material or not cover the same material as the standard exams. Also, the results are interpreted differently.</p>
Gym, music, and art class	<p><b>Accommodations</b> for “special” classes like gym, music, and art can be helpful for some students.</p> <p>These are similar to the accommodations in the classroom. Students might get extra time to learn to play an instrument, or they may be allowed to complete an art project in a different format.</p>	<p>Sometimes, an assignment in a class like gym, music, or art is unreasonable for your child. When this happens, a <b>modification</b> can be made.</p> <p>For example, the gym teacher might reduce the number of laps a student needs to run. The music teacher might not require a child to learn how to read music.</p>