

Accommodations Versus Modifications

Est. Time: 30 Minutes

Objective

Learn to differentiate between accommodations and modifications.

Overview

Although most students with disabilities are able to learn in the general education classroom, sometimes their disability makes it more difficult to learn the material or to demonstrate skills. Students who experience barriers to learning might benefit from allowable adaptations, or changes, in educational environments or practices that help them overcome the barriers the disability presents. Careful consideration of a student's strengths and needs can guide the identification and selection of instructional and testing *accommodations* and *modifications*. First, however, it is important to know the difference between the two.

Accommodation — A change to instructional or testing procedures or materials that allows a student to fully access the information and to accurately demonstrate knowledge. Instructional accommodations are changes made to the delivery of classroom instruction or to the accompanying materials. Testing accommodations include changes to the format of a test (e.g., providing a test in large print) or to the administration procedures (e.g., a student might be allowed to mark her answers directly in the test booklet instead of filling in the bubble answer sheet) that do not affect what a test measures. Students with disabilities who use instructional accommodations are required to learn the same content at the same level of proficiency as their peers who do not use instructional accommodations. In other words, accommodations:

- **Do not** change the content of instruction
- **Do not** change the expectations for learning
- **Do not** reduce the requirements of the task

Accommodation Examples

- Braille materials
- Text-to-speech software
- Advance organizers
- Extended time on tests
- Taking a test in a separate room
- Allowing typed responses as an alternative to handwritten responses

Modification — A change to the instruction or curriculum that alters either the content of that instruction or student performance expectations. Modifications are useful for students for whom all possible accommodations have been considered but who nevertheless require additional measures to help them progress in the general education curriculum. Modifications:

- **Do** change the expectations for learning
- **Do** reduce the requirements of the task

Accommodations Versus Modifications

Modification Examples

- Reduce assignments
- Assign different reading material
- Use lower-level texts containing the same subject matter presented in a simplified form and in less depth
- Test on a subset of the covered content

Activity

Read about the students below and decide whether the adaptation described is an accommodation or a modification. Justify your responses.

1. Because Emory has cerebral palsy, she has difficulty with tasks that involve fine motor skills, such as turning the pages of a book. Therefore, she is allowed to use e-texts instead of the physical textbooks used by her fellow classmates.
2. Cody loves to tell stories but has a hard time putting his words down on paper. When his teacher assigns a two-page paper, she allows Cody to write one or two paragraphs instead.
3. Dantrell is deaf. A sign-language interpreter accompanies him to his classes and relays all the information that the teacher presents.
4. Anya has a learning disability. As such, she has difficulty processing the information her teacher covers in class and consequently taking good notes. To help her be successful, the teacher provides her with a study guide for each lesson.
5. To prepare for an upcoming lesson on character development and plot, Mrs. Winters asks her students to read a 100-page novel. Knowing that Adora has difficulty reading grade-level text, she assigns her a 20-page abridged version of the same novel written at a lower level.
6. Cévon, a student with ADHD, struggles to stay focused and to organize his time. When his teacher assigns a long-term project, she breaks the task into smaller pieces, requiring Cévon to complete each of them by a given date.
7. Anabelle's class has been working on multiplication. Although the focus has been on multiplying three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers, Anabelle has been working on multiplication facts. For the test, her teacher creates a different test for Anabelle with different types of problems.