

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Testing Accommodations

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JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

Individuals with disabilities can have many different types of limitations that affect their abilities to take tests. These individuals may need accommodations when taking employment exams, standardized tests, licensure exams, and classroom exams. Individuals with disabilities who are protected by disability legislation (such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act) can ask for, and receive, accommodations in order to take tests.

The following questions are typical testing accommodation questions received at JAN's national toll-free hotline. A JAN consultant who is familiar with various types of disabilities and who is familiar with the ADA and other disability legislation crafted the responses. These responses are not guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and are not intended to be legal advice.

- For more information on employment testing, read the EEOC's [Title I Technical Assistance Manual, Chapter 5.6](#).
- For more information on examinations or courses, read the Department of Justice's [Title III Technical Assistance Manual, Chapter 4.6](#).

What is alternative format?

Alternative format is any format that is different from the existing test. Alternative format may be: large print, Braille, color-coded text, audio (reader, tape/cd, or computer).

What is extended time?

Extended time means allowing the test-taker extra time to complete the test. The amount of extended time should be correlated to the test-taker's disability or limitations. Common examples of extended time include: time and a half, double time, and unlimited time.

What is a reader?

A reader is a person who reads the test to the test-taker. This person should be familiar with the terminology or language used on the test. A reader does not interpret, re-word, or explain the test. A reader reads the test directions, questions, and answer choices to the test-taker.

What is a scribe?

A scribe is a person who writes down, or otherwise records, the test-taker's responses. The scribe does not create answers for the test-taker or help the test-taker identify correct answers. The scribe simply writes the test-taker's answers down on the test or answer sheet.

What type of tests will people need accommodations for?

A person with a disability can ask for an accommodation on any exam. Some examples of exams are: teaching license exams, driver's license exams, college entrance exams, exams in college or technical school, employment tests, and typing tests.

Who can ask for accommodations in testing?

Individuals with disabilities that inhibit their abilities to take tests can ask for an accommodation.

How does a person with disability ask for a testing accommodation?

A person with a disability can ask for an accommodation when registering to take a test. Oftentimes, the testing company provides testing accommodation forms to submit. The individual can also make a request verbally or in writing. The person with a disability is responsible for providing documentation of a disability, and the individual can describe the type of accommodation that will be effective.

Do testing accommodations cost the test-taker extra money?

No. The test-taker needing an accommodation pays the same cost as any person taking the same test.

Will test scores or standards be lowered/changed/alterd for person with disability?

Generally, no. If all test-takers must obtain a certain "passing score," so must the test-taker with a disability. The test-taker with a disability may need an accommodation to help meet the standard, but the standard does not have to be lowered, changed, or altered.

One exception to this rule is a situation where the test standard is arbitrary or is not related to the educational or employment requirements. For example, an

employee must be able to type 40 words per minute to pass an employment test, but typing is not an essential function of the job.

Will a person with a disability be granted a “test exemption” as an accommodation?

Generally, no. If the test is a requirement of the application process, the job, class or program, or licensing credentials, the test-taker with a disability will probably have to take the test. The test-taker with a disability may, however, ask for an accommodation to assist with the taking the test.

What types of accommodations might be helpful to a test taker?

Limitations in Cognitive/Neurological Abilities:

- [Memory Loss](#)
- [Concentration](#)
- [Organization](#)
- [Time Management](#)
- [Reading](#)
- [Writing](#)
- [Math](#)

Limitations in Motor Abilities:

- [Sitting](#)
- [Fingering](#)
- [Grasping](#)

Limitations in Sensory Abilities:

- [Deaf](#)
- [Hard of Hearing](#)
- [Low Vision](#)
- [Blind](#)
- [Speech](#)

Other Limitations:

- [Stress Intolerance](#)
- [Nausea](#)
- [Headache](#)
- [Fatigue](#)
- [Temperature Sensitivity](#)
- [Respiratory](#)
- [Dietary Needs](#)

Situations and Solutions:

The following situations and solutions are real-life examples of accommodations that were made by JAN customers. Because accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, these examples may not be effective for every workplace but give you an idea about the types of accommodations that are possible.

An applicant with vertigo is required to take a pre-employment screening test to be considered for the position.

The test is normally performed on a computer, but the applicant states that prolonged computer use causes her vertigo to flare up. To accommodate this need, the employer allowed the individual to take a written version of the test instead.

A new-hire telemarketer had deficits in reading comprehension.

He participated in CBT (computer-based training), which included watching a customer service tutorial, then completing timed quizzes on the computer. To accommodate this employee, the employer adjusted the color scheme, resolution, and font size of the computer screen, making the appearance of material easier to view. The employee held a ruler to the computer screen to “stay on the line” when reading test questions. The employee was allowed to watch the tutorial over again, and was given extra time to complete quizzes.

An applicant was unable to complete a pre-employment typing test because the testing software did not work with his assistive technology.

The employer offered a reader, but the applicant was concerned that this would not reflect his true ability, since the reader could not match the speed and consistency of a screen reader. The applicant’s vocational rehabilitation was able to provide a proctored test of his typing ability using an accessible typing program.

Jude, an applicant with a depression and anxiety, is applying for a customer service position that requires a pre-employment test.

Due to medication that Jude takes for both conditions, his processing speed is a bit slower. He feels he can only do his best on the test if he has the accommodations of extended time as well as taking the test in a private location to help limit distractions. In order for the employer to even consider those accommodations, the employee will need to disclose the mental health impairments and be prepared to provide medical documentation.

A student with muscular dystrophy was limited in her use of the computer.

She was accommodated with a miniature computer keyboard and mouse. The keyboard worked with the slightest touch and no force was needed to activate the keys.

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