

Accommodation for Specific Disabilities

The following is a brief listing of the types of testing accommodations that are appropriate for test-takers with different disabilities:

For test-takers with **visual impairments**, tests must be presented in appropriate formats, such as Braille, large print, and audiotape. Time limits must be extended for all of these media, and speed tests are inappropriate. Within the context of changing test materials into different formats, certain types of test material may be problematic, as noted earlier. In addition, the test-taker will probably need accommodation or assistance in marking answers.

For test-takers who have **physical impairments** that affect use of the hands, the principal test accommodation is the adjustment of test time limits and the avoidance of speed tests. In addition, accessible test sites, the assistance of a test administrator in turning pages and marking answers, and extra rest breaks may be required.

Among **hearing impaired** test-takers, only those who are deaf need extensive testing accommodations. For the majority of prelingually deaf persons, that is, persons who lost their hearing before acquiring speech, verbal tests are not good measures of any ability. For most pre-lingual deaf people, English is a second language and the native language is sign language. (Of course, there are exceptions to this rule; some prelingually deaf people have very good English skills.) Therefore, as a general rule, verbal tests cannot be used effectively with most deaf test-takers to test anything except verbal ability. Tests that are completely nonverbal, however, do not pose a problem. Test instructions should be given very carefully, with the use of sign language or demonstration, and time limits should be explained clearly. Extra time should be allowed on power tests that include verbal material.

Individuals with specific **learning disabilities** now constitute the largest group that requires testing accommodations. The specific tasks that are affected by learning disabilities vary widely, so it is difficult to generalize

about testing accommodations. Accommodations will need to be arranged on a case-by-case basis for applicants with specific learning disabilities. The most frequently used accommodations are the allowance of additional time for power tests and reconsideration of speed tests in areas of specific weakness. For example, a test-taker who had a specific learning disability that affected numerical computation might be screened out by a speeded test of computation. Under the ADA, it would be inappropriate to use that test unless it tested an essential job function that the test-taker could not perform with or without reasonable accommodation.