



# Accommodations, Modifications, and Assistive Technology

The difference between accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology is a common question.

**The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 defines:**

**Assistive technology (AT)** as “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability.” In simple language, assistive technology is a tool that helps a student do something that without the tool he or she could not do.

**IDEA and its regulations do not define accommodations and modifications, but it is generally agreed upon that:**

**Accommodations** allow a student to complete the same assignment, test, or activity as other students, but with a change in timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, or presentation. The material is the same, but a student learns the material in a different way.

**Modifications** adjust an assignment, test, or activity in a way that changes the standard or alters the original measurement. Modifications change what a student is taught or expected to learn.

The individual needs of the student will determine what adaptations the student will be provided through special education services as documented on the IEP.

Because IDEA does not specifically define accommodations and modifications, and because these three types of adaptations are often written together in an IEP, providers may feel unclear about what supports fall into each category. Below are practical examples of how accommodations, modifications, and assistive technology might be documented in the supplementary aids and services or adaptations section of the IEP.

## **Examples of Accommodations, Modifications, and Assistive Technology**.....

### **Communication**

Every morning, the students in Ms. Barry’s classroom come together for a morning meeting. Their first job is to take turns greeting all of the other students. Lila has a speech delay and struggles to complete this task.



**Original task:** Say “Hello friends” or “How are you?” during morning routine or meeting

**Task with sample accommodation:** Allowed extra time to greet peers

**Task with sample modification:** Wave to peers

**Task with sample assistive technology:** Use speech output device to greet peers

## Fine Motor

When students arrive in Ms. Garcia’s classroom, they are expected to “sign in” by writing their name on a small whiteboard. After three months of school, August is still struggling with the first letter of his name.

**Original task:** Sign-in by writing name on a white board upon entering the classroom

**Task with sample accommodation:** Provide a larger white board so there is more room to write

**Task with sample modification:** Write only the first letter of the name

**Task with sample assistive technology:** Use letter cards to “build” the name instead of writing it

## Functional Skills

During snack time each day in Mr. Harrison’s classroom, Ming stands up or moves away from the table an average of eight times. She usually eats most of her snack, but Mr. Harrison wants to minimize the number of times he has to redirect Ming during snack time.

**Original task:** Remain seated during snack time

**Task with sample accommodation:** Sit at a smaller table with just a few peers to minimize distractions

**Task with sample modification:** Stand at the table while eating snack

**Task with sample assistive technology:** Use a weighted lap blanket or “wobble seat” while sitting at the table