



Tips for Communicating with Professors

HOW DO I TELL PROFESSORS ABOUT MY ACCOMMODATIONS & DISABILITY-RELATED ISSUES?

First, good communication begins with you! Understand *what* you are wishing to communicate to the professor. Go on an exploration to know yourself and Student Accessibility Services!

1. Familiarize yourself with the SAS program (e.g. test accommodation forms).
2. Discover your areas of learning strength and weakness (e.g. how do I learn the best?). Make a list. Communicate any relevant strong or weak areas to your professor to allow him/her to help you learn better.
3. Identify the functional limitations of your disability (e.g. how does my disability impact me in the day to day academic setting?). Think of how you best learn in the classroom and what interferes with your learning as well as what enhances it!
4. Role-play with the SAS Accessibility Coordinator. This way, you will feel more comfortable talking with your professor.

Once you have completed the four steps above, you are ready to do the following:

1. Schedule an appointment to discuss accommodations during professors' office hours or at some mutually convenient time.

*Professors' office hours are usually listed on the course syllabi. Meeting in a more relaxed, one on one setting with your professor, rather than right before or after class, helps eliminate the feeling of being rushed, or being caught by surprise. It also increases privacy, minimizes distractions, and sets the stage for building a comfortable, working rapport between you and your professor.
2. When your accommodations include testing or note taking services, it is best to talk with your professors about logistical arrangements. In other words, avoid simply handing your professors the forms and leaving before developing a plan. Think of how you best learn in the classroom and what interferes with your learning as well as what enhances it!
3. Make sure that the professor is familiar with the test accommodation form, confidential memos, and prescribed accommodations. If you detect that a professor has not used the form before, explain the form in detail.
4. If you are using assistive technology or alternative media, you are encouraged to invite your professors to reach out to the Assistive Technology and Alternate Media Coordinator at accessiblemedia@nu.edu.

WHEN SHOULD I TELL PROFESSORS ABOUT MY ACCOMMODATIONS & DISABILITY-RELATED ISSUES?

Timing can be important. Often it is best to approach your professors either before, or within the first few days of the term. However, students who disclose their accommodation needs later in the term are encouraged to give professors ample notice.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I TALK WITH MY PROFESSOR ABOUT MY ACCOMMODATIONS OR NEEDS?

Talk with your professors periodically throughout the term to inform them about any challenges you are facing in the class and present any test accommodation forms requiring the professors' signatures.

Frequent communication between professor and student helps accommodations work well.

For many students, well-executed accommodations mean the difference between success and failure. Try to react positively and communicate openly!

Ask questions to clarify statements from the professor. Repeat what you heard back to the professor to make sure both parties are on the same page. Take notes during the conversation to capture all that is communicated.

E-mails - Avoid sending e-mails that you would not feel comfortable saying in person. Do not send e-mails in ALL CAPS.

If there is a breakdown in communication, take a deep breath. Then, contact SAS Accessibility Coordinator at sas@nu.edu or (858) 521-3967.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

Under legal mandates and University policy governing confidentiality, faculty is committed to confidentiality regarding information you disclose to them personally, on the test accommodation form, or by other means of written communication. Confidentiality protection also applies to information professor gain through contacts with the Student Accessibility Services.

HOW MUCH DISABILITY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION SHOULD I SHARE WITH MY PROFESSORS?

Your professors may ask for more information from you than is written on your accommodation letter and try to make you feel comfortable to provide helpful information related to your academic success and curriculum access. You should feel comfortable answering questions related to the accommodations requested.

You are not obligated to give any information you feel is personal or does not relate to the accommodations requested. Legally you are not required to disclose the nature of your disability or to submit copies of disability documentation to other University departments or personnel once you have become a registered student with the SAS.

You are invited to meet with the SAS Accessibility Coordinator when deliberating about how much disability-related information to share.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS AND RIGHTS IF I HAVE BEEN REFUSED A SAS-ISSUED ACCOMMODATION?

If it appears that the professor has some questions about the accommodation or uncertainty about the process, contact SAS right away and schedule an appointment with the Accessibility Coordinator using sas@nu.edu ; you may also suggest the professor contact SAS directly by calling (858) 521-3967.

When you work as a team (you, faculty, SAS), a solution is usually not difficult to find.

SAMPLE TEMPLATE YOU MAY SEND/EDIT TO PROFESSORS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Attached is an example of a template you may use to effectively communicate with your professor.

Dear Professor _____, (Enter Professor's Name)

Date _____(enter date)

Hello, my name is _____(enter your name) and I will be in your upcoming course _____(enter course name) beginning on _____(enter start date of class) at the _____campus (enter campus location). I am currently a student registered with the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and approved for accommodations through SAS. Attached is my current Accommodations Letter with specifics on the accommodations that I am currently approved for. (Attach your accommodations letter) I would appreciate a time to meet with you to discuss my accommodations request for your class as well as to fill out the Onsite Test Accommodations Request Form. Attached is a copy for you to view prior to our meeting. (Attach Onsite Test Accommodation Request Form) Please respond with a time and date that we can meet as I need to submit this Onsite Test Accommodation Request Form to SAS at least 5 business days before each test to guarantee my accommodations request. I sincerely thank you for your time and look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, you may also contact the Academic Coordinator at accomodations@nu.edu or get information from their website at <http://www.nu.edu/sas>.

Sincerely,

_____(enter your name)

_____(enter your student ID #)

_____(Provide your phone #)