



College Ready, Here We Come!

A Checklist from the Independent Futures that Work! project
for Identifying Skills Needed to Be Ready for Postsecondary Education

Getting ready to attend postsecondary education institutions after high school, such as colleges and universities, community colleges, vocational schools, and transition programs, can be a challenging process. This checklist is designed to help youth with disabilities identify tasks that need to be completed in order to be ready to attend postsecondary education programs and to be successful in the postsecondary environment. Remember that it will be important to reach out to the Disability Support Services (DSS) at your chosen institution for personalized assistance and accommodations that are tailored to your needs. Postsecondary education is a journey, and with the right skills and support, youth with disabilities can achieve their educational goals and beyond. Remember that there is a lot of assistance available to you from you high school counselor, your vocational rehabilitation counselor, and your Disability Support Services counselor, as well as friends and family. Ask for help when needed so that you can be successful in your postsecondary education experience.

Area:	Skills the Youth Has Mastered:
<p>Decide What You Want to Study Deciding what you want to study is important because it will influence what type of program and what type of institution you will enroll in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Think about your interests and career goals <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a field of study or major that excites you <input type="checkbox"/> Find out what type of institution offers that field of study/major <input type="checkbox"/> Find out the type of courses that are needed for that field/major
<p>Research Different Types of Institutions Look into the different types of institutions that offer postsecondary education opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Look for institutions that offer your chosen program <input type="checkbox"/> Check to see if the institutions offer the support services you need for your disability. <input type="checkbox"/> Look at the different types of postsecondary education institutions to see which best meets your needs

<p>Prepare Academically Be sure that you are academically prepared for the program you would like to pursue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you are taking the necessary high school courses for your program/major <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure your grades are high enough to meet admission requirements for your chosen program
<p>Take Standardized Tests Some programs require specific standardized tests for entry into the program, such as the ACT or SAT.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify what standardized tests are required for admission to the institutions you are considering <input type="checkbox"/> Find out what accommodations you might be eligible to use on the test <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for taking the needed standardized test(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Register for and take the needed standardized test(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Know what score is needed for admission to the institutions you are considering
<p>Gather Important Documents Identify and collect any needed information to apply to your program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Get a copy of your high school transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Ask appropriate people for letters of recommendation <input type="checkbox"/> Get evidence of any volunteer or community experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Get copies of disability documentation such as IEPs, 504 Plans, medical records, and eligibility determination
<p>Apply to Institution(s) Complete the application process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out applications for the institution(s) you would like to attend <input type="checkbox"/> Pay attention to application deadlines <input type="checkbox"/> Pay application fees, if any
<p>Apply for Financial Aid There are many opportunities to get assistance with the cost of postsecondary education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) <input type="checkbox"/> Look for scholarships and grants you can apply for <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule an appointment with a school guidance counselor to find out opportunities for local scholarships <input type="checkbox"/> Research information needed for scholarship applications <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out assistance to write and proof any scholarship application essays

<p>Visit Institutions Go on visits to the postsecondary institutions you are considering to see if you like the campus and atmosphere.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Go on campus tours to see if it's the right fit <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to professors, students, and Disability Support Services (DSS) counselors <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to an admissions counselor
<p>Choose an Institution Make a decision about which postsecondary institution you will attend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review acceptance letters to determine which institutions you are eligible to attend <input type="checkbox"/> Compare any financial aid offers to see which one is the best fit for you <input type="checkbox"/> Choose the institution whose programs and available financial aid best fit your needs
<p>Plan for Accommodations Postsecondary institutions offer accommodations for students with disabilities through the Disability Support Services (DSS) office.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make an appointment with your chosen institution's Disability Support Services (DSS) office <input type="checkbox"/> Ask what documentation you need to provide to show proof of a disability <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss with the DSS counselor what accommodations will be of benefit to you <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss how to request your accommodations from your professor/teacher
<p>Attend Orientation Most postsecondary institutions have an orientation that students are required to attend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend an orientation session on your chosen campus <input type="checkbox"/> Tour the campus <input type="checkbox"/> Familiarize yourself with campus resources like counseling services, Disability Support Services (DSS), Peer Tutoring, Financial Aid, Student Life, Library, etc.
<p>Register for Classes Most postsecondary institutions will require you to register for your classes online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meet with an advisor to select what classes you will need to take <input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to navigate the online registration portal <input type="checkbox"/> Register for classes

<p>Arrange for Housing and/or Transportation</p> <p>Some students will live on campus and some will live off-campus, either at home or an off-campus living arrangement. If you live off campus, you will need to have transportation to and from on-campus classes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decide where you will live as you pursue your education <input type="checkbox"/> If living on-campus, make arrangements with campus housing, especially if any accommodations are needed <input type="checkbox"/> If living off-campus, find a place to live that is affordable and if needed, accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Plan how you will get to and from school if you are living at home or off-campus <input type="checkbox"/> If you will have your own transportation, ensure you obtain any required parking permits needed to park in a campus parking lot
<p>Begin Your Classes</p> <p>Your classes will be listed on your course schedule and list what days, times, and locations where they will meet. Finding assistance when you struggle will help you to be successful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the days and times of your classes <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the locations of your classes <input type="checkbox"/> If you will be receiving accommodations in any of your classes, introduce yourself to the instructor and ask for those accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> If you experience any difficulties within your classes, be sure to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> speak with the instructor <input type="checkbox"/> seek out any tutoring opportunities available <input type="checkbox"/> speak to your DSS counselor for assistance <input type="checkbox"/> use the accommodations you have available <input type="checkbox"/> Find study methods that work for you
<p>Self-Advocacy Skills</p> <p>Speaking up for yourself and asking for help will be very important in the postsecondary environment, as your parent can no longer advocate for you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Practice speaking up for yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for help when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Explain your disability and accommodation needs <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for and use your available accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> Understand your rights under disability laws <input type="checkbox"/> Use email and office hours to ask questions <input type="checkbox"/> Use clear and effective communication with your professors and peers

Time Management and Organizational Skills

Keeping up with assignments, due dates, and schedules will be important for your success in the postsecondary environment.

- Create a schedule for your classes and study time
- Use tools like calendars and reminders
- Keep track of assignments and deadlines
- Use folders or digital tools to organize notes and materials
- Set aside time daily to study
- Attend classes on time
- Attend all classes unless you have an excused illness

Financial Preparation

Financial Aid may not cover all the costs of tuition and fees, books, housing, transportation, food, and other living expenses associated with attending a postsecondary institution. Planning is needed to ensure all anticipated expenses are covered.

- Find out the total cost of all anticipated expenses related to attending your institution, including tuition and fees, books, housing, transportation costs, food, and other living expenses
- Determine the amount of financial aid available, if any
- Determine the amount of expenses not covered by financial aid
- Determine how the remaining expenses will be paid, such as a part-time job, parent funding, private student loan, savings account, etc.



Independent Futures that Work is a project of the Alabama Parent Education Center in conjunction with the Parent Training and Information Centers from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas

<https://independentfuturesthatwork.com>

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