



# Transitioning to Post-Secondary

Youth who have learning disabilities and/or AD/HD, who want to attend post-secondary, should start planning their transition to post-secondary education early (e.g., grade 9 or 10) and seek the help of their parents or other adults who can assist them.

Some of the things that you should do **early** in your transition planning include:

1. **Participate in your IPP meetings.** Become actively involved in your education, understand your diagnosis, and be aware of what accommodations and supports are available and helpful to you.
2. **Develop learning strategies.** Get help with test taking, studying, organization, and time management strategies. Post-secondary instructors expect that students will independently use these skills.
3. **Explore your interests.** Meet with a guidance counsellor to talk about what you might like to do after high school. Volunteer and take advantage of work experience programs and meet people in your field of interest. Think about what kinds of careers may be a good fit with your strengths and talents.
4. **Embrace assistive technology.** Whether you use simple timers on your cell phone or elaborate text-to-speech software, learn what technologies you can use to your advantage and practice using them to increase their effectiveness.

When you start to get an idea of what you may be interested in studying at post-secondary, consider the following:

1. **Attend post-secondary institution's open houses.** These are great opportunities to check out the campuses, meet students and staff, and ask questions.
2. **Apply early and keep track of deadlines and other requirements.** Make sure to compile all documents that are required for your application and have someone double check it before you send it in. A second pair of eyes can often help to make sure nothing was missed!



3. **Consider taking a reduced course load.** Some individuals with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD may be more successful if they reduce the amount of work they need to complete in a semester. Be sure to check with your specific program that this is possible. Some classes are only offered once per year and some programs require students to follow a specific schedule.
4. **Begin to look into funding for your education.** Depending on your financial situation, you may need to apply for a student loan. You may also be eligible for scholarships and bursaries. Check for scholarships within your institution as well as outside the institution. There is also funding available specifically for individuals with disabilities. External awards for individuals with disabilities are available at:
  - [www.disabilityawards.ca](http://www.disabilityawards.ca)
  - [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca)

Government funding can be found here:

- [http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/student\\_grants/csg/disabilities\\_service\\_equipement.page](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/student_grants/csg/disabilities_service_equipement.page)

Always check with your advisor if you think you may be eligible for funding but need help finding out.

When you begin your studies at your post-secondary institution consider the following:

1. **Go to the accessibility centre and meet with a student advisor.** The advisor can help get you set up with supports and accommodations for your classes. Make sure to bring your assessment report with you!
2. **Monitor your academic performance from the very beginning.** Do not wait until the end of the semester to ask for help. If you notice that you are struggling, speak with your advisor. Your advisor may be able to help you get a tutor or an academic strategist.
3. **Remember that your disability is kept confidential by the accessibility centre.** Your instructors will know that you require certain supports and accommodations, but they are not provided information about the nature of your disability. You may choose to disclose your disability with students and staff at the institution or keep it private.



4. **Understand that students with disabilities who receive accommodations DO NOT have an unfair advantage.** Some people may argue that this is the case, however, accommodations merely level the playing field for individuals with disabilities. No one would say that an individual who wears glasses to correct their vision has an advantage. You still need to put in the work and understand yourself as a learner. Accommodations simply help you with the aspects of learning that are difficult for you because of your disability. Do not be afraid to access supports or accommodations.

While you are attending post-secondary:

1. **Remember all of the above** and continue to develop your ability to advocate for yourself. It is up to you to register and disclose your disability with the accessibility centre and to access supports and accommodations. Be aware of when you are having difficulty and ask for help right away. Take control of your education and continue to develop a deeper understanding of yourself as a learner and a human being. Work hard and have fun!

Additional Resources:

- [www.canlearnsociety.ca](http://www.canlearnsociety.ca)
- Duty to accommodate legislation. This document talks about your legal rights as an individual with a disability and the responsibility of post-secondary institutions to provide reasonable supports and accommodations.  
[http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins\\_sheets\\_booklets/bulletins/duty\\_to\\_accommodate\\_students.asp](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins_sheets_booklets/bulletins/duty_to_accommodate_students.asp)
- Consider attending the *Transition to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities* event organized by the Postsecondary Service Providers to Students with Disabilities (PSPSD). This event is typically held in February of each year at St. Mary's University College. Ask your guidance counsellor or search for the event online to find the date. A large part of this event involves post-secondary students with disabilities sharing their experiences and offering advice to future post-secondary students. This event is free. Parents and youth are encouraged to attend together.