

school advocacy checklist

The goal of an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or 504 plan is to provide the "FAPE"—Free and Appropriate Public Education. When advocating, it is crucial to remain "child-focused" and to use specific, action-oriented language.

Below is a school advocacy checklist to help prepare for meetings and secure the proper support.

Part 1: Strategic Phrases to Use in Meetings

The way you phrase a request can shift the conversation from "why we can't do that" to "how we will make this happen."

- When requesting more support:
 - *Phrase:* "What specifically is being put in place to ensure access to [specific activity/curriculum]?"
 - *Why:* This phrase directly references your child's right to *access* the same education as their peers.
- When requesting specific data:
 - *Phrase:* "Could you share the specific, measurable data that supports the current approach?"
 - *Why:* This moves the team from observations ("he seems fine") to concrete, objective measurements.
- When a request is denied:
 - *Phrase:* "Could you provide that decision in writing, including the specific data and reasons why this service or accommodation is not appropriate at this time?"
 - *Why:* This creates a record of the refusal, which is essential if you need to escalate the request to due process.
- When the language is vague:
 - *Phrase:* "Could you clarify the specific plan, duration, and frequency of this service/accommodation? I want to ensure we have a shared understanding."
 - *Why:* "shared understanding" is an excellent, non-confrontational way to insist on clear metrics that can be audited.
- When the focus is on resources:
 - *Phrase:* "I understand that resources are a factor, but let's first establish what my child needs to make progress, then figure out how the school can provide that."
 - *Why:* It is the school's legal obligation to provide necessary services; resource limitation is a separate, secondary concern.

Part 2: Specific School-Based Accommodations

Accommodations change *how* your child learns, not *what* they are learning. This checklist is a guide—customize it to their unique sensory, academic, and behavioral needs.

The Environment (Sensory/Location)

- Preferential Seating: Near the teacher, away from distractions, or with space to stand.
- Sensory Breaks: Pre-scheduled or upon request (e.g., using a non-verbal cue) in a designated "recenter zone."
- Alternative Space for Testing/Transitions: A quiet room for exams or separate, staggered hallways for busy class changes.
- Sensory Friendly Tools: Use of noise-canceling headphones, fidgets, or a "crash nook."

Academics and Task Management

- Extended Time: For assignments, tests, and in-class projects.
- Reduction of Assignment Load: Completing odd-numbered math problems to demonstrate mastery, for example.
- Visual Aids and Organizers: Use of checklists, graphic organizers, color-coded folders, and written instructions.
- Alternative Formats for Demonstration: Allowing a oral report instead of a written one, or a multiple-choice test.
- "No-Penalty" for Minor Errors: Ignoring spelling/handwriting issues if the assignment is on content.

Behavioral and Social Support

- Predictable Routine: Advance notice of all schedule changes (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers).
- Social Skills Instruction: Direct, structured teaching in understanding social cues, taking turns, and conflict resolution.
- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): To understand the "why" of a behavior and create a positive support plan.














- Consistent Cueing System: Non-verbal reminders to help with self-regulation or staying on task.
- Designated Safe Person/Place: A specific staff member or room your child can go to when overwhelmed.



Sensory-Friendly Home Audit Guide

NEURODIVERSITY. SUPPORT. CONNECTION.

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SENSORY INPUT	TRIGGER FOUND?	SIMPLE FIX
 VISUAL	<input type="checkbox"/> Harsh overhead glare	 Use floor lamps / warm bulbs 
 AUDITORY	<input type="checkbox"/> Echoing hallway 	Add a runner rug
 OLFACTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong laundry scent 	<input type="checkbox"/> Switch to fragrance-free 
 TACTILE	<input type="checkbox"/> Itchy sofa fabric 	<input type="checkbox"/> Add a soft throw blanket 
 VESTIBULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> No place to “recenter” 	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a quiet floor nook

✨ FIND YOUR GLIMMERS. CUSTOMIZE YOUR AUDIT. ✨

