



A High School Guide to Preparing for the Transition to Life After High School

Introduction

Welcome to the High School Section of the Disability Resource Insights Guide!

High school is a dynamic period of growth where increasing independence meets new challenges and opportunities. In this section, you'll build on the skills developed earlier by deepening your self-advocacy, planning for your future, and connecting with supportive community resources. Whether you're a student preparing for college or the workforce, a family member providing guidance, or an educator supporting students' unique journeys, this guide offers actionable strategies, interactive activities, and essential resource links.

How to Use This Section:

- 🦻 **Students:** Engage with the exercises to sharpen your self-advocacy, plan for postsecondary options, and practice real-world skills.
 - 🦻 **Families:** Collaborate with your teen on planning sessions and encourage proactive discussions about the future.
 - 🦻 **Educators:** Use the guide to help integrate transition planning and person-centered practices into individualized learning and support plans.
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Preparing for Increased Independence

Transitioning Toward Self-Determination

You'll be expected to take on more responsibility as high school progresses. This section focuses on:

Developing Self-Directed Learning:

- 🦻 Shifting from guided support to independent decision-making.

Managing Time & Responsibilities:

- 🦋 Tips for organizing schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and personal time.

Building Confidence:

- 🦋 Encouraging a mindset of growth where mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn.

Activities & Tools:

Self-Reflection Journals:

- 🦋 Regular prompts to assess your progress and areas for improvement.

Time Management Planner:

- 🦋 A tool to help you organize your daily and weekly schedule.

Tips for Families & Educators:

- 🦋 Provide opportunities for teens to make decisions and solve problems on their own.
 - 🦋 Provide guidance and feedback that promote self-reliance while remaining supportive. Adults should shift from telling teens what to do to offering guidance through questions that lead them to solutions.
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Transition Planning

Charting Your Future

Planning for life after high school is a key step toward adulthood. This section helps you:

Explore Postsecondary Options:

- 🦋 Discuss different paths, such as college, vocational training, or entering the workforce.

Engage in Person-Centered Planning:

- 🦋 Use strategies that focus on your unique strengths, interests, and needs to create a tailored transition plan.

Build a Support Team:

- 🦋 Collaborate with family members, teachers, counselors, and even community-based organizations that specialize in postsecondary transitions or career readiness.

Activities & Tools:

Transition Planning Checklist:

- 🦋 A comprehensive list of steps to help you prepare for your next phase.

Career Interest Assessment:

- 🦋 An interactive quiz to discover potential career paths and identify related strengths.

Tips for Families & Educators:

- 🦻 Facilitate meetings with school counselors, transition coordinators, or community-based organizations.
- 🦻 Encourage students to share their dreams and concerns about the future. Recognize that career aspirations can sometimes feel unrealistic. Allow them to explore their goals, such as wanting to be a veterinarian because they love animals while highlighting other potential career options in that field.

Understanding and Requesting Accommodations

Advocating for Your Needs in Every Setting

Knowing how to secure the support you need is crucial as environments become more complex:

Learn the Process:

- 🦻 Understand how to request accommodations in academic settings and prepare for similar processes in work and postsecondary environments.

Know Your Rights:

- 🦻 Deepen your understanding of legal protections (such as IDEA, ADA, section 504) and what accommodations may be available.

Tailor Your Requests:

- 🦻 Reflect on what has worked in the past and anticipate future needs based on your experiences and changing environments.

Activities & Tools:

Scenarios:

- 🦻 Practice discussing and negotiating accommodations in IEP meetings, class discussions, and other real-life contexts.

Accommodations Planner:

- 🦻 A guide to help you document what accommodations have worked and what adjustments might be needed in new settings.

Tips for Families & Educators:

- 🦻 Support students by rehearsing these conversations in safe, constructive environments.
- 🦻 Help them document and track the accommodations they need as their settings change. Remember, postsecondary education and employment accommodations are based on documented disability, not documented accommodation use.

Self-Advocacy in Action

Practicing Communication in Real-World Settings

High school presents a variety of opportunities to put your self-advocacy skills into practice:

Engage in Diverse Scenarios:

- 🦋 From IEP meetings and doctor visits to interactions with school counselors and teachers, practice expressing your needs clearly and respectfully.

Refine Communication Skills:

- 🦋 Build on your early advocacy by adapting your approach to fit more complex or challenging situations.

Learn from Experience:

- 🦋 Reflect on feedback and adjust your strategies to become an even more effective advocate for yourself.

Activities & Tools:

Scenario Workshops:

- 🦋 Group or one-on-one sessions where you role-play different situations.

Feedback Sessions:

- 🦋 Opportunities to receive constructive feedback from trusted adults after advocacy interactions.

Tips for Families & Educators:

- 🦋 Encourage honest discussions about both successes and challenges in advocating for oneself.
- 🦋 Model effective communication and provide constructive feedback that promotes growth.

Continuing Career Exploration

Building on Your Employability Skills

High school is an ideal time to continue developing and refining skills that will serve you in future careers:

Advanced Soft Skills:

- 🦋 Strengthen teamwork, problem-solving, and communication through academic and extracurricular activities.

Real-World Experience:

- 🦋 Seek internships, work-based learning programs, volunteer opportunities, or part-time jobs that allow you to explore different career paths.

Long-Term Career Planning:

- 🦋 Research potential fields of interest and consider the skills and education needed to pursue them.

Activities & Tools:

Career Exploration Projects:

- 🦋 In-class or group projects that simulate real-world job tasks or research different professions.

Skill-Building Workshops:

- 🦋 Sessions focused on specific soft skills or career readiness topics.

Networking Opportunities:

- 🦋 Guidance on how to connect with professionals or organizations for mentorship and advice.

Tips for Families & Educators:

- 🦋 Encourage exploration of various career fields through shadowing experiences or informational interviews. Remember, exposure leads to learning. The more career pathways they are exposed to, the better they can make informed decisions.
- 🦋 Support skill-building activities that blend academic learning with practical, real-world applications.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Wrapping Up and Preparing for the Future

As you navigate high school, remember that every skill you develop now sets the stage for success in the future:

Recap of Key Skills:

- 🦋 You've learned to become more independent, engaged in thoughtful transition planning, mastered the art of requesting accommodations, practiced self-advocacy, and explored career paths.

Action Steps:

- 🦋 Choose specific activities from each section to integrate into your daily routine. Reflect on your progress with your support team and adjust your plans as needed.

Looking Ahead:

- 🦋 The strategies and skills honed in high school will empower you to take on the challenges of postsecondary education or the workplace with confidence.

Additional Resources:

- 🦋 Explore further readings, connect with community organizations, and attend workshops that can provide ongoing support as you transition to the next phase of your journey.

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