

In college YOU are responsible for getting the help you need. You must be able to advocate for yourself.

Advocates are persons who know what they want and will stand up for their rights. Making each of the following 4 steps a habit will help you to be a good self-advocate and a successful student.

1. Know Yourself and Your Disability

Before you can advocate for yourself, you need to identify your strengths and challenges.

- Strengths – the skills you do well right now.

My strengths are

- Areas to improve – the skills you need to improve that will help you realize success.

The areas I need to improve are

- Interests – the career areas you may want to explore.

My interests are

- Preferences – the ways you like to learn.

The ways I learn best are

You also need to know how to talk about your disability in a way that other people understand. Do you know what your disability is?

My disability is _____

Where is your official documentation or paperwork that explains what your disability is? _____

The college or school has my documentation so that I can get the accommodations that will help me succeed:

- YES NO**

**** If no, this should be one of your immediate priorities.**

2. Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

Colleges cannot close their doors to you because you have a disability. Your school must provide services that will allow

you an equal opportunity to succeed in school. Please refer to the brochure titled, "Rights and Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities." It has more information on this topic.

My responsibilities are

My rights are

3. Know Where to Go for Help

A very important part of being a successful student is the ability to know when you need help or when you don't need help.

Writing down phone numbers of the people on campus who will help you, including staff at the Disability Resource Center, is a good idea.

The people I can go to for help are:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

4. Take Action

Once you know who you are and what you need, you can work on reaching your goals. You should also work on communicating your needs. This means that you should practice talking with your instructors. You might practice on a counselor or a trusted friend. Practice explaining your disability and the accommodations or modifications you will need to help you be successful. Realize that you will not be the first student to ever talk with an instructor. Talking to an instructor might seem scary now, but as you become more aware of who you are, you will gain more confidence. When you are ready, schedule a meeting with your instructor(s).

These ideas can make the meeting with your instructors go smoothly:

- Talk with your instructor before the semester starts.

- Schedule a private meeting in his/her office.
- Be prepared to discuss your disability.
- Be ready to refer the instructor to the Disability Resource Center office if they need more information than you have.
- Be confident! You know yourself better than anyone.
- Thank your instructor for meeting with you.

-OR-

Some students find it easier to write a letter to give to their instructor(s) instead of talking to them. Writing a letter allows you to edit and re-edit what you are trying to say.

Manage Your Time Wisely

One of the best ways to be a successful student is to use your time wisely.

Planning your time each day will help you to stay on track. Some people like to carry a calendar with them to help organize their day.

Other people make “to do” lists and cross off tasks as they are completed.

Estimate how long you need to accurately complete your different school tasks and set that time aside **each day**. Give yourself extra time to work on homework to make sure that you do a good job.

Do you know how long you need to study before you take tests? If you wait until the last minute, you might not have enough time to get your mind ready for your test. Managing your time might be the most important factor in being a successful student.

Self Advocacy

1 in a 6 Part Series

Winona State University Disability Resource Center

136 Howell Hall
drc@winona.edu

www.winona.edu/disabilityservices

Voice: 507-457-2391

FAX: 507-457-2957

MN Relay Services:

1-877-627-3848

Text Developed by:

Sean Lancaster and Daryl Mellard
University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning
Division of Adult Studies

This Brochure is available in alternative formats upon request.

Self Advocacy

Steps you can
take to be a
successful
student

In a 6 Part Series