

Tips for the College-Bound Student with Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Take a tour of the campus and orient to campus residential life. Be sure to include rules and procedures.
- If you had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in high school, make sure you know what it said, what your diagnosis (classification) was, and what accommodations were written into it (e.g., extended test time, a scribe to take notes for you). Do not rely on your parents to communicate these issues on your behalf anymore.
- Become a self-advocate. This means you need to learn how to articulate your needs to others. If you're used to having your parents speak for you regarding educational needs, assume they can no longer do that when you are in college (even if they are continuing to provide you with emotional and financial support).
- Get and stay connected with the Access Services office. You may not think you need it, but having the name and phone number of someone who understands your disability can be very helpful if you run into some trouble spots during the school year. The campus Counseling Center and Student Support Services are great resources to use if you need extra support.
- Know what kind of living situation is best for you. Do you do best with a roommate or a single room?
- Transitions are difficult. Each new semester is difficult because everything is changed. Your parents or a trusted person can assist you with establishing a new routine. Have a clear schedule outlined for each day. Have clear instructions on what to do with unplanned changes to your schedule.
- Develop a safety plan and identify a "safe place". ASD can cause situations to become stressful easily. Locate a safe place where you can go to regain control, such as a study carrel, counselor's office, dorm room, etc.
- Do you need help to understand the "hidden curriculum"? These are the unspoken rules the other students understand. They could include things like acceptable classroom behavior, swearing, how to dress, etc. Ask a trusted friend or adult to tell or show you what to do in unfamiliar situations. Role-play social situations and practice different scenarios and possibilities.