

9 Reasons Kids Might Refuse to Use Accommodations

By Amanda Morin

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/self-advocacy/9-reasons-kids-might-refuse-to-use-accommodations>

Imagine this: You've had your child evaluated and there's an IEP or a 504 plan in place. The team worked hard to find the right accommodations to use in the classroom and school. You're relieved that your child has them. But then you hear—either from your child or from a teacher—that your child refuses to use those accommodations. You can't believe it—why would your child do that?

It's not uncommon for kids to refuse to use accommodations, and there are many reasons why. Read on to learn some common reasons.

1. They don't want to stand out or feel different.

Like all of us, kids have a powerful need to feel like they fit in and belong. However, kids who learn and think differently often feel like they stand out from their peers. They might have special tutoring or be pulled from class for services. An accommodation can be another reminder of how they're different from their classmates. Some kids prefer to tough it out or struggle with an assignment, rather than stand out from the crowd.

2. They're worried about how other kids might react.

Using a classroom accommodation is *not* cheating. It simply helps level the playing field for kids who learn and think differently, by helping them access coursework. But that concept may be hard to understand for their classmates who don't use accommodations. That means some kids worry that their peers are going to say "no fair!" or make fun of them for using accommodations in class. Even one negative comment from a classmate can make your child reluctant to use an accommodation.

Read a young woman's explanation of **why she felt ashamed to use accommodations in school**. <https://www.understood.org/en/young-adults/life-is-hard/am-i-cheating-the-shame-i-felt-using-accommodations-for-dyslexia>

3. They think they're doing something wrong.

Kids who learn and think differently are used to school being difficult. Once they have accommodations in place that work well, they may start doing better. And that can be confusing. It might feel like the accommodation is doing the work for them, which can feel wrong. They may not yet understand that the accommodation is a tool that helps them show knowledge or get their work done.

4. They don't believe or understand how it will help.

It's important that kids have a say in choosing accommodations. But that doesn't always happen. As a result, they may not know why the accommodations were chosen. Or they may be told what the accommodations are, but not why they have them. It also could be that kids were involved in picking accommodations but didn't fully understand the process.

Without your child's buy-in, accommodations might not get used. Knowing why extra time on tests is an option or how a fidget is supposed to help is key in getting your child to use an accommodation. It's also important to give your child a few weeks to get comfortable with it.

5. They don't want to ask to use it (or they forget to ask).

Ideally, accommodations are readily available or built in to lessons, so it's easy for kids to use them. But that's not always the case—for example, if there's a substitute teacher or a lesson isn't set up with accommodations in mind.

Rather than draw attention to themselves by pointing out the need or asking permission to use it, some kids will just go without. Or kids may just forget to ask if no one reminds them.

6. They don't know how to ask for it.

Self-advocacy is an important skill for kids who learn and think differently. It helps them ask for what they need—including accommodations. But not all kids know how to ask. They may not have the skills or the words to ask to use an accommodation. And kids who are shy about self-advocating or who don't want to look like they're correcting the teacher might opt to just not use their accommodation, rather than speak up.

Explore **self-advocacy sentence starters** kids can use to start speaking up. <https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/self-advocacy/self-advocacy-sentence-starters-for-kids>

7. They don't want to admit they need help.

As kids get older, they may become more aware of how learning differences impact them in school. That awareness might make them feel emotions like shame. Kids may also want to “prove” to everyone that they don't need help. If they're not yet comfortable talking about their challenges or asking for help, they may refuse to use accommodations. In some cases, kids may think they don't need an accommodation, when they actually do.

Read **what prompted one college student to open up to friends** about the help she needed. <https://www.understood.org/en/young-adults/what-is-like/im-finally-letting-go-of-the-shame-of-adhd-and-learning-disabilities>

8. They don't need it in this class or lesson.

Not all accommodations are necessary in all classes or lessons. For example, in a lecture-heavy English class, some kids may need speech-to-text technology to record a lecture. In a more hands-on class, this may not be necessary. Just because an accommodation is available for all classes doesn't mean kids need to use it in all classes.

9. It isn't helpful or doesn't work.

Kids who don't see the benefits of an accommodation may refuse to use it. And sometimes, an IEP or 504 accommodation doesn't end up working as well in practice as it seemed like it would. But not all kids are able to explain when an accommodation isn't

working for them. They also might not know how to suggest something else that might work better.

If your child is refusing accommodations or isn't sure about using them, it's important to understand why. That way you can start to think about how to approach the issue. Just keep in mind that there isn't always one solution. One place to start is by asking open-ended questions to start a conversation with your child.

Learn more by exploring **common accommodations**. And get advice on how to **show empathy to your child**. <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/common-classroom-accommodations-and-modifications>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/understanding-childrens-challenges/talking-with-your-child/9-ways-to-show-empathy-when-your-child-is-struggling>

Between Families Newsletter
9 Reasons Kids Refuse to Use Accommodations
May 2021

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT AND SUBMIT TO YOUR ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE WORKER

1. True/False: It's uncommon for kids to refuse accommodations.
2. When referring to accommodations, what specific accommodations is the article talking about?
 - a. Housing
 - b. Schooling
 - c. IEP or 504 Plan
 - d. Extracurricular Activities
3. Fill in the Blank: They may have _____ or be pulled from class for services.
4. True/False: Using a classroom accommodation is not cheating.
5. Fill in the Blank: It might feel like the accommodation is doing the work for them, which can feel _____.

6. #5 talks about which reason?
7. What is something that is important for kids who learn and think differently?
 - a. Being shy
 - b. Being forgetful
 - c. Have a routine.
 - d. Have self-advocacy.
8. True/False: Kids may also want to “prove” to everyone they don’t need help.
9. Fill in the Blank: An _____ or _____ accommodation doesn’t end up working as well in practice as it seemed like it would.
10. Which of the following is NOT a Reason?
 - a. They don’t do it in the class or lesson.
 - b. They think they’re doing something wrong.
 - c. They might feel angry about it.
 - d. They don’t want to stand out or feel different.

ANSWERS

1. True/**False**: It’s uncommon for kids to refuse accommodations.
2. When referring to accommodations, what specific accommodations is the article talking about?
 - a. Housing
 - b. Schooling
 - c. **IEP or 504 Plan**
 - d. Extracurricular Activities
3. Fill in the Blank: They may have **_special_ _tutoring_** or be pulled from class for services.
4. **True**/False: Using a classroom accommodation is not cheating.
5. Fill in the Blank: It might feel like the accommodation is doing the work for them, which can feel **_wrong_**.
6. #5 talks about which reason? **They don’t want to ask to use it (or they forget to ask)**.
7. What is something that is important for kids who learn and think differently?
 - a. Being shy
 - b. Being forgetful
 - c. Have a routine.
 - d. **Have self-advocacy.**

8. True/False: Kids may also want to “prove” to everyone they don’t need help.
9. Fill in the Blank: An IEP or 504 plan accommodation doesn’t end up working as well in practice as it seemed like it would.
10. Which of the following is NOT a Reason?
 - a. They don’t it in the class or lesson.
 - b. They think they’re doing something wrong.
 - c. They might feel angry about it.
 - d. They don’t want to stand out or feel different.