POST-SECONDARY ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENTS

More and more students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are applying to attend colleges and universities. Most institutions of higher learning in the United States require standardized academic testing in order to evaluate applicants for admission. The most common standardized tests are the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), ACT (American College Test), and GRE (Graduate Record Exam).

The SAT and ACT are used for undergraduate admission decisions. In addition to the SAT and ACT, some undergraduate schools require additional testing, such as SAT subject tests, or may require placement tests before and/or after admission. Placement tests are very common for community colleges, which may not require SAT and ACT scores. The PSAT (Preliminary–SAT) is not used for post-secondary admissions decisions; however, PSAT scores are often considered when evaluating scholarship applicants (for example, the National Merit Scholarships). The PSAT is taken in the junior year of high school. Some students also take it in 10th grade. Tenth grade scores are not usually considered for scholarship opportunities.

The most common test for admission to graduate school is the GRE. There are other graduate school tests as well, which are specific to the applicant’s course of study, for example the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) and the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test).

Accommodations are available to some students with disabilities who take post-secondary admissions tests (and the PSAT). Common accommodations available to students with ASD are extended time, use of a computer for essay portions of tests, and extra or extended breaks between sections. Each test provider has its own set of rules for determining who gets accommodations and when. Requests for accommodations should be sent early – at least two months before testing is a good guideline. This is because requests for accommodations go through a thorough review. Some test providers require that you be approved for accommodations before registering to take a test.
Most test providers require documentation of a disability and of the need for the requested accommodations. In most cases, your child’s school will help you complete a request for accommodations and help you substantiate your child’s need. (Indeed, the SAT allows your child’s school to make the request for you, if you sign a consent form.) You may need to show your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) to prove that your child has received the same accommodations for testing at school as well as a report from a qualified professional who diagnosed your child with ASD. However, be aware that inclusion of an accommodation in an IEP or 504 Plan does not automatically qualify your child for an accommodation on a post-secondary admissions test. Similarly, having ASD does not guarantee that your child will receive accommodations. Your child must show that ASD impacts his or her ability to take standardized tests. For example, if your child is requesting extended time, he or she must show past difficulty with test-taking under timed conditions.

Be sure to check out the website of the test provider for more information about accommodations on post-secondary admissions assessments for students with disabilities. Your school’s guidance or college counselor will also have information to help you.

Related Articles:

- Accommodations and Supports for School-Age Students with ASD
- Should I Disclose My Diagnosis on My College Application?

Additional Resources:

- SAT Services for Students with Disabilities
- ACT Services for Students with Disabilities
- GRE Accommodations for Test Takers with Disabilities

The Center for Autism Research and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia do not endorse or recommend any specific person or organization or form of treatment. The information included within the CAR Autism Roadmap & trade; and CAR Resource Directory & trade; should not be considered medical advice and should serve only as a guide to resources publicly and privately available. Choosing a treatment, course of action, and/or a resource is a personal decision, which should take into account each individual’s and family’s particular circumstances.