

# Creating Accessible Classroom Materials for Diverse Learners

*A Classroom Guide for Adapting Instructional Materials to Support Student Access*

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## Purpose & Overview

This guide supports teachers in creating accessible instructional materials that allow students with disabilities to engage with grade-level content more effectively. Many traditional classroom materials can present barriers for students who experience challenges with reading, organization, attention, or language processing.

The purpose of this guide is to help teachers adapt and present instructional materials in ways that improve clarity, reduce unnecessary barriers, and promote active participation in learning while maintaining academic expectations.

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## Instructional Outcomes

By applying the strategies in this guide, teachers will be able to:

- Identify barriers in classroom materials that may limit student access
  - Adapt instructional resources to improve clarity and understanding
  - Provide structured supports that help students organize information
  - Increase student engagement and participation in learning activities
  - Align accessible materials with IEP accommodations and learning goals
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## Understanding Barriers in Classroom Materials

Students with disabilities may experience difficulty accessing instructional materials when:

- Text is dense or difficult to navigate
- Directions are lengthy or unclear
- Assignments require multiple steps without structure
- Important information is not clearly highlighted
- Materials rely heavily on reading or writing without additional supports

When teachers adjust how materials are presented, students are better able to focus on understanding content rather than struggling with format or organization.

## Strategies for Creating Accessible Materials

Teachers can increase accessibility by modifying how materials are structured and presented.

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>What It Supports</i>	<i>Example in the Classroom</i>
Guided notes	Organization of information	Students complete structured notes during instruction
Highlighted key information	Identifying important ideas	Key vocabulary or concepts bolded or color-coded
Chunked assignments	Managing complex tasks	Large assignments divided into smaller sections
Graphic organizers	Understanding relationships between ideas	Story maps, concept charts, or math problem organizers
Simplified directions	Clear task expectations	Short, step-by-step written instructions

These strategies help students focus on learning the content rather than navigating confusing materials.

## Designing Materials that Support Understanding

Accessible classroom materials should help students clearly understand what they are learning and what is expected of them. Teachers can support this by:

- Providing visual examples or models of completed work
- Breaking instructions into short, manageable steps
- Including visual supports such as diagrams or charts
- Using consistent formatting and organization across assignments
- Pairing written instructions with verbal explanations

When instructional materials are clear and structured, students are more likely to remain engaged and complete tasks successfully.

## Teacher Implementation Reflection

During lesson planning and instruction, teachers may consider:

- Are directions clear and easy for students to follow?
- Are materials organized in a way that highlights key information?
- Are assignments broken into manageable steps?
- Do materials include visual supports or organizational tools?
- Are accommodations included when necessary to support student access?

Reflecting on these questions helps ensure materials support both learning and independence.

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## Promoting Student Independence

Accessible materials also help students build independence in their learning. When materials are clearly structured, students are better able to:

- Understand assignment expectations
- Organize their thoughts and work
- Complete tasks with fewer reminders
- Monitor their progress during assignments
- Develop confidence in their academic abilities

These skills support long-term academic success and self-management.

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## Connection to IEP Goals and Classroom Supports

Accessible instructional materials often align with IEP supports related to:

- Organization and task completion
- Reading comprehension and information processing
- Attention and focus during instruction
- Written expression and structured responses

Consistent use of accessible materials helps students participate fully in classroom instruction while making progress toward their learning goals.

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## **Closing Reflection**

Creating accessible classroom materials allows teachers to remove unnecessary barriers and provide students with clear pathways to understanding. When instructional materials are structured, organized, and supportive, students with diverse learning needs can engage more confidently in learning and demonstrate their knowledge effectively.