



< Educational strategies

The difference between accommodations and modifications



By The Understood Team



When a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan, you'll likely hear the word *accommodation*. You may also hear school staff members say *modification*. While the two words sound similar, they mean different things.

An **accommodation** changes *how* a student learns the material. A **modification** changes *what* a student is taught or expected to learn. Here is a chart that explains the differences.

	Accommodations	Modifications

	Accommodations	Modifications
Classroom instruction	<p>Accommodations can help kids learn the same material as their peers. This allows them to meet the same expectations.</p> <p>A student with dyslexia, for example, might listen to an audio version of a book. But it's still the same book that the rest of the class is reading. Likewise, a student who has trouble focusing might get seated next to the teacher, but still has to do all the regular class assignments.</p>	<p>Kids who are far behind their peers may need changes to the curriculum they're learning. These are called modifications.</p> <p>For example, a student could be assigned shorter or easier reading assignments, or homework that's different from the rest of the class. Kids who receive modifications are <i>not</i> expected to learn the same material as their classmates.</p>

	Accommodations	Modifications
Classroom tests	<p>Accommodations for testing can be different from those used for teaching.</p> <p>For example, using spellcheck might help a student with writing difficulties take notes during class. However, it wouldn't be appropriate during a weekly spelling test. At the same time, this student might benefit from having extra time to complete the spelling test or using a keyboard if the physical act of writing is difficult.</p>	<p>Modifications in testing often mean that a student covers less material – or material that is less complex.</p> <p>For example, a spelling test may require the class to study 20 words. However, a student with modifications might only have to study 10 of them. Or there might be two different lists of spelling words. With a modification, <i>what</i> the student is tested on is different.</p>

	Accommodations	Modifications
Standardized testing	<p>Statewide tests allow some accommodations like extra time or taking a test on a computer. It's best if these are the same accommodations a child uses to take class tests.</p>	<p>Some students take what's called an <u>alternate assessment</u>. This state test includes modifications to the regular test. Questions might be fewer or not cover the same material as the standard exams. Also, the results are interpreted differently. Before you agree to an alternate assessment, find out what the impact will be on your child's academic and work future.</p>

	Accommodations	Modifications
PE, music, and art class	<p>Accommodations for “special” classes like PE, music, and art can be helpful for some kids.</p> <p>These are similar to accommodations in the classroom. Kids might get extra time to learn to play an instrument. Or they may be allowed to complete an art project in a different format.</p>	<p>Sometimes, an assignment in a class like PE, music, or art is unreasonable for your child. When this happens, a modification may be made.</p> <p>For example, the PE teacher might reduce the number of laps a student needs to run. The music teacher might not require a child to learn how to read music.</p>

See a list of [common accommodations and modifications](#). And keep in mind that accommodations don't always have to be formalized in an [IEP or a 504 plan](#). Sometimes teachers can provide support on their own. If a student

doesn't have an IEP or a 504 plan, here are some **examples of informal supports** that families can request.

To learn more, watch as an expert explains the difference between accommodations and modifications.

Accommodations vs Modifications



Share



About the Author



The Understood Team is made up of passionate writers and editors. Many of them have kids who learn and think differently.

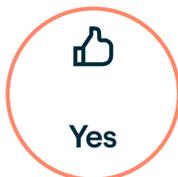
Reviewed by



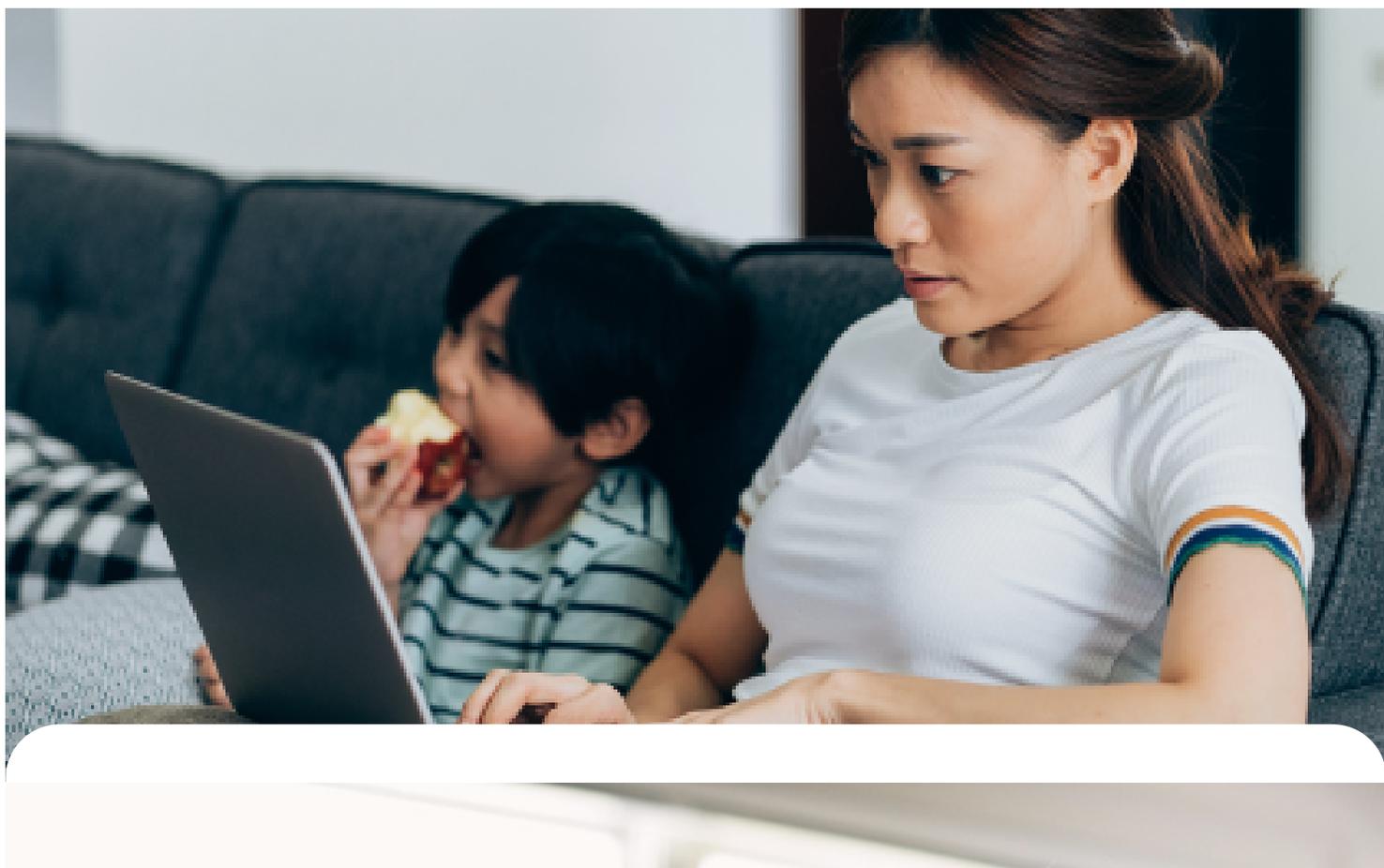


Donna Volpitta, EdD is co-author of *The Resilience Formula: A Guide to Proactive, Not Reactive, Parenting*.

Did you find this helpful?



Recommended for you





Stay informed

Sign up for weekly emails containing helpful resources for you and your family

Email address

 **Subscribe**

Review our [privacy policy](#). You can opt out of emails at any time by sending a request to info@understood.org.



[About us](#) [Our mission](#) [Join our team](#) [Our experts](#)

[Media center](#) [Contact us](#) [Our partners](#)

[Privacy policy](#) [Terms of use](#) [Fundraising disclosure](#)

[Sitemap](#)

Follow Us

related logos are trademarks of **Understood For All Inc.** and are used with permission. This website provides information of a general nature and is designed for information and educational purposes only and does not constitute medical or legal advice. Understood is a nonprofit initiative. Understood does not and will not take money from pharmaceutical companies. We do not market to or offer services to individuals in the European Union. For more information, please review the **Terms and Conditions.**

“Understood” as used above includes Understood For All Inc., and their officers, affiliates, parents, and related entities, and their respective employees, contractors, or other personnel.

Understood For All Inc.

145 Hudson Street, Suite 5B

New York, NY 10013-2150

*Media inquiries: **media@understood.org** (preferred) or **(516) 654-7584***