

# Teaching Students with Medical/Mobility Impairments

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The Ohio State University Partnership Grant  
Improving the Quality of Education for Students with Disabilities

### Description

Mobility impairments are often due to conditions such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury. Students may use crutches, braces, or a wheelchair, and in a few instances, may be accompanied to class by a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). Medical impairments are often invisible disabilities, caused by such conditions as arthritis, asthma, cancer, orthopedic limitations, post surgery, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, or seizure disorder. The student may have limited energy; difficulty walking, standing, or sitting for a long time; or other disabling characteristics, such as an inability to write.

Functional limitations may be episodic for some students who may experience dizziness, disorientation, and difficulty breathing during a recurrence. For example, with asthma or a seizure disorder, a student may have periods when they function without any accommodations, but at other times their functional limitations are quite severe.

Even with the same disability, students with mobility or medical impairments may have a wide variety of characteristics. For example, persons who have experienced a spinal cord injury are likely to show differing degrees of limitation. They may require different types of class accommodations or may need no accommodations, depending upon functional limitations.

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For more information please visit the UNLV Disability Resource Center website at [unlv.edu/studentlife/drc](http://unlv.edu/studentlife/drc)

NOTE: This tip sheet is available in alternate format upon request. Please call the DRC at 702-895-0866.

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## Guidelines

**Exam Accommodations:** Students who have upper body limitations who are unable to use their hands will likely need exam accommodations. These accommodations may include extended time, a scribe, or voice recognition software. Assist the student in coordinating these accommodations with the Disability Resource Center (DRC).

**Access to Class Notes:** Students who are unable to use their hands may need assistance in finding a note taker, or they may elect to tape record lectures.

**Tardiness:** Some students are unable to quickly get from one location to another due to architectural barriers or difficulty in using adaptive transportation. The transportation system is influenced by traffic, weather, and scheduling problems. For these reasons, a student may be late getting to class. Please be patient when this happens.

**Accessible Furniture:** In a few situations, a student may be unable to use the type of chair or table provided in a particular classroom. Height-adjustable desks and chairs are placed in classrooms by the DRC in response to a request by a student with a disability. These items should not be removed or repositioned.

**Inaccessible Classroom:** If your classroom is inaccessible and a student is unable to get into your classroom, your class location must be moved to an accessible location. Call the DRC immediately for assistance in getting your class location changed.

**Laboratory Courses:** Some students may need assistance for laboratory courses. These students may need to be paired with an able-bodied student or a laboratory assistant. Consult the DRC if you need assistance in making these arrangements. A student using a wheelchair may need a lower lab table to accommodate the wheelchair.

**Missed Exams or Classes:** Some students experience recurrence of a chronic condition requiring bed rest and/or hospitalization. These students need extra time to complete incomplete work and the opportunity to make up tests. Other arrangements may be necessary if a student misses a class excessively due to a disability and is unable to make up the essential requirements of the class. In either situation, it is essential not to penalize a student for his/her disability and at the same time maintain the integrity of the requirements of the class.

**Field Trips:** Make arrangements for field trips or other out of classroom experiences as soon as possible so that all students are able to experience all class teaming opportunities. Consult with the DRC about arrangements if you need assistance.