



THE OFFICE OF ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

COMPASS: Sweet Success Center, Thomas Library

P.O. Box 720 | Springfield, Ohio 45501

Phone: (937) 327-7870 | Fax: (937) 327-7918

Wittenberg University Accessibility Services Student Resource Guide

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Thank you for being a member of the Tiger Community. At Wittenberg University, we strive to have a culture of belonging, support, and inclusion. As a student of this community, you matter and belong here.



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About Accessibility Services

Office Mission and the Students We Serve

The mission of the Office of Accessibility Services at Wittenberg University is to provide, coordinate, and advocate for services, which enable students with disabilities to receive equal access to a college education and to all aspects of university life.

The Office of Accessibility Services provides services to students with disabilities.

Office Staff, Contact Information, and Roles

Stephen Mathews

Director for Accessibility Services

mathewss@wittenberg.edu | 937-327-7870

Stephen conducts intakes, processes accommodation requests, provides academic coaching to students, collaborates with campus partners, and facilitates programs throughout campus.

Madison Green

COMPASS and Accessibility Services Program Coordinator

greenm12@wittenberg.edu | 937-327-7891

Madison coordinates exam services, manages the accommodation and ESA renewal processes, and provides support to students as needed.

Grace Sever

Senior Director of Academic Services and Student Success

whiteleyg@wittenberg.edu | 937-327-7958

Grace reviews student appeals and assists in complex cases.

Institutional Commitment to Non-Discrimination, Legal Obligations, and the Students We Serve

Wittenberg University's Responsibility

Access and meaningful disability inclusion on campus is a shared responsibility and an obligation under federal and state regulations. Every member of the campus community (students, faculty, and staff) plays a part in ensuring non-discrimination on the basis of disability.

Accessibility Services is the entity charged with facilitating reasonable accommodations for disabled students in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities and its Amendments Acts



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(1990 and 2008), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), and related Ohio state laws. The ADA defines **disability** as **any physical or mental health impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities**. Major life activities include but are not limited to walking, eating, sleeping, self-care, learning, communicating, and socializing.

Reasonable accommodations are specific adjustments to academic activities, modifications to policies, or adjustments to the institution's design that directly ameliorate or remove barriers to access for disabled students. These can include exam accommodations, housing accommodations, or alternate format course materials. Reasonable accommodations must meet two standards: that they provide access equal to that of nondisabled peers and that they are reasonable in that they do not compromise fundamental nature of courses and programs nor pose an undue burden.

Students with disabilities have the right to request Accommodations and the responsibility to initiate their requests in a timely manner and participate in the interactive process. Accessibility Services guides the interactive process by reviewing medical documentation, interviewing the student to learn more about their functional limitations, and approve reasonable accommodations in academic and campus life activities. Faculty are responsible for implementing academic accommodations. Students are responsible for delivering their Accommodation memos to faculty every semester, but other approved accommodations may be facilitated differently. For example, for housing accommodations, Accessibility Services and Residence Life coordinate this internally. It is important to note that accommodations of any nature are not retroactive.

A Note on The Transition from Highschool to College

In K-12 education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines how educational supports are provided. IDEA is an "entitlement" law intended to guarantee persons with disabilities a free and appropriate primary and secondary education. IDEA is about success, which can often include course modifications (typically via Individualized Education Plans or IEPs). In summary, IDEA states that education is a RIGHT and must be provided in an appropriate, least-restrictive environment to all individuals.

In postsecondary education, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 form the legal foundation for protections to individuals with disabilities. These laws are "non-discrimination" statutes based on a civil rights model. They aren't entitlement laws, and they don't guarantee successful learning or mandate the creation of special programs for persons with disabilities. ADA is about access with the goal to remove barriers and for otherwise qualified students and provide reasonable accommodations so that persons with disabilities have an OPPORTUNITY to participate.

As noted, the legislative requirements on institutions are different from high school to college and based on different frameworks. For a lot of students, the transition can be jarring due to the differences in accommodations available, the need for a student to self-advocate, and the need to learn a new system of accommodation logistics. Understanding these differences will help you



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better understand the accommodation process for students, assist students with their needs or skill building, and to be a supportive campus partner.

What Does Disability Look Like at Wittenberg?

- In 2023-24, Accessibility Services served 216 students, or 16.6% of students enrolled. Among those students, 132 students needed academic accommodations and 73 students needed housing accommodations. 21 of those students needed both.
- The most common academic accommodation type was testing accommodations, followed by course material accessibility, and assignment deadline flexibility.
- Most disabilities on campus are non-visible. The largest three categories of disability among students seeking accommodations were: psychological disorders, chronic health conditions, and ADHD.

The Accommodation Process and How to Receive Services

To receive accommodations, a student must first self-identify (self-disclose) the presence of a disability to Accessibility Services staff. Typically, this looks like a student submitting a [request for an accommodation](#). Once the presence of a disability is known, students meet with the Director for Accessibility Services to engage in a conversation related to their disability and the requested accommodation. The conversation is a part of the Interactive Process, which is the formal name for the process to receive accommodations. Once Accessibility Services staff has conducted the meeting, they will review all information provided during the Interactive Process; which includes, the initial request, formal meeting with the student, and any provided documentation (typically provided from a medical provider).

The Interactive Process may be robust and is highly individualized with different outcomes for each request. This process aims to find what institutional-related barriers or functional limitations exists for the student specific to their disability and what equal access could look like for them.

Once the review is complete, students are provided with a determination. The determination will be approval, partial-approval, invitation to provide more information for consideration, or denial of accommodation request. If approved, Accessibility Services staff notifies campus partners. For faculty, academic Accommodation Memos are provided to students with instructions on how to properly distribute the documents and how to initiate communication about logistical implementation of the accommodations outlined in the memo.

Available Services



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Accommodations

As noted previously, reasonable accommodations are specific adjustments to academic activities, modifications to policies, or adjustments to the institution's design that directly ameliorate or remove barriers to access for disabled students. There must be a direct relationship between what is requested and what effect it has on the student's equal access to university programs and services. There are different types of accommodations: academic, housing, and dietary. There is no complete list of accommodations available as it can vary and adjust per situation.

Temporary Accommodations

In most cases for temporary accommodations, a student is experiencing an injury or a condition that seriously impacts their daily functioning for a short period of time. Typically, athletes will work with their coach and athletic trainer who then notify Accessibility Services. All other students should email accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu.

If you engage with a fellow student that shares a major life event that is impacting their daily functioning, please encourage them to contact Accessibility Services.

Success Advising

Any Wittenberg student has COMPASS services available to them. COMPASS: Sweet Success Center is a first-stop resource and connection center serving students, faculty, staff, and families. COMPASS provides targeted services that include: success coaching/tutoring, academic skill building, time management and organization, accessibility services, comprehensive advising, support for students on academic probation, navigating campus processes and structures, career development, student employment, and campus connection.

For students with disabilities, there are times when accommodations are not reasonable, but support services would ameliorate the student's barriers. Students will be referred to their Success Advisor or offered the opportunity for Success Advising from Accessibility Services staff. Typically, when a referral is made, Accessibility Services staff will work in congruence with the student to provide the Success Advisor with helpful context that will create a stronger plan for the student's success; in no circumstances will the student's disability be disclosed. Some examples of Success Advising of this nature:

- Weekly or bi-weekly meetings
- Creation of time management resources and skills
- Study skill building
- Building organization habits
- Engaging in dialogue about self-advocacy



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Campus Services and Resources

Across Wittenberg's campus exists a plethora of resources available for students. Accessibility Services staff commonly makes referrals to resources based on a student's needs. Some resources are, but not limited to:

- Writing Center
- Math Workshop
- Faculty Office Hours
- Academic Coaching
- Tutoring Services
- Career Engagement

In case of an emergency, contact Wittenberg Police Department immediately:

Emergency: (937) 327-6363

Non-Emergency Dispatches/Switchboard: (937) 327-6231

Renewing Academic Accommodations

Academic Accommodations must be renewed each academic year by the student. A student will need to submit a [Renewal Request](#); students only need to submit the first section (demographic information). If a student would like a change in their academic accommodations, they should follow the same instructions but will select request for a change for request type. If a student no longer needs academic accommodations or is leaving the institution, they may notify Accessibility Services by emailing accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu.

[Housing and Dietary renewals](#) can be found on page 8.

How to Navigate and Advocate for Your Accommodations

Once a student has been approved for academic accommodations. The Director for Accessibility Services will provide the student with an accommodation memo for the academic year. Students are responsible for delivering their Accommodation memos to each of their faculty every semester via email. Faculty are responsible for implementing academic accommodations. However, students are **strongly** encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss how their accommodations will look/work within their classroom. Students should understand that every class, course instructor, and semester is different, therefore engaging in conversation with each of their faculty will better foster a relationship of communication and access.



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Draft Email to Faculty

Emailing faculty can be nerve-racking, especially within a student's first-year. Students are welcome to email the Director for Accessibility Services a copy of their email if they would like feedback. Otherwise, here is a draft a student can use to send to their faculty (make sure to also attach your accommodation memo!!!):

Hello Professor <LAST NAME>,

I hope this email finds you well. I am a student in your < CLASS NAME & CLASS NUMBER> on <DAYS AND TIME>. I wanted to reach out to you as I have academic accommodations established through Accessibility Services. I have attached my accommodation memo in this email. I would like the opportunity to meet in person to discuss how the accommodations will work within your class. Could you share with me your open office hours so I could stop by?

I look forward to meeting with you.

*Sincerely,
<YOUR NAME>*

What to Talk About with Faculty Regarding Accommodations

When you meet with faculty remember they are a person who cares, is excited to meet you, and wants you to have the best possible Wittenberg learning experience. The conversation should be an opportunity to understand how they will facilitate the approved accommodations in their classroom. Please know, in no situation do you need to disclose your disability to any faculty or staff member outside of the Accessibility Services office – this is a protected right under the ADA. In this conversation, ask faculty questions specific to your accommodations, for example:

- “I have extended testing time. I was curious what the format for tests or exams would be and what your preference was for me when testing?”
- “I have approved breaks during class. Would you like me to let you know when I need to leave for a short break?”
- “At times I may need an extension on an assignment, which is one of my accommodations. Do you prefer I ask for that extension over email?”

Ongoing Communication with Faculty

After you provide your accommodation memo and meet with your course instructors, students are encouraged to continue communicating throughout the semester related to their accommodations. This may consist of, reminding them of testing accommodations for a final that is normally not on



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Moodle or engaging in conversation about an accommodation that was approved but has not been used until later in the semester.

Housing and Dining Accommodations Process

If a student is approved for a housing or dining accommodation, the student will be notified via email from the Director for Accessibility Services. A written memo does not exist for this type of accommodation. Residence Life, Dining Services, and Accessibility Services communicates directly regarding the approved accommodation and a student's disability or private information is never disclosed without the student's permission. The appropriate office will follow up with the approved student via email with the next stage of the process.

Renewing Housing and Dining Accommodations

Most Housing and Dietary accommodations are not required to be renewed as they rollover each academic year. If a student wishes to change their accommodations, they will [submit a request](#) with the "request for a change" instructions above.

However, Emotional Support Animals need to be renewed annually within the summer term. Students need to complete [the renewal form](#) and provide all necessary documents. Students who do not complete the renewal form will not be approved to bring their ESA to campus for the upcoming academic year.

Required documents are:

- Complete the ESA Agreement
- Provide updated proof of vaccinations
- Upload a recent photo (within the last month) of your ESA; the image must be clear and should include the animal's face

Fundamental Alterations

With any accommodations, there is the possibility that the adjustment or modification could be unreasonable due to it posing a fundamental alteration to the nature of the program, course, or assessment. Accommodations should allow the student to meet learning outcomes without compromising the essential elements of course design, pedagogy, stated goals/objectives, and teaching/learning methodologies.

Accommodation Memos include line items of accommodations that are likely to be reasonable in most classes. However, it is the faculty member's responsibility, upon receipt of a student's



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Accommodation Memo, to review what is outlined and either implement the accommodations as described or contact the Director of Accessibility Services to initiate a reasonability concern. The Director will document the reasons faculty believe specific accommodations pose a fundamental alteration. The Director will guide the conversation so that each case is analyzed in accordance with institutional process, policies, and best practices from the field of disability services in postsecondary education. In some cases, the Director will seek legal guidance or additional input from faculty and administrative leadership to help reach a thoughtful decision.

When accommodations are determined to be unreasonable because they pose a fundamental alteration, the Director will inform the student in writing and invite them to re-engage in the interactive process to identify alternative accommodations or options for moving forward.

More information about fundamental alteration and examples can be found at this link:

<https://www.adainfo.org/article-archive/adjusting-access-reasonable-modifications-policies-practices-and-procedures/>

Confidentiality, Disclosure, and Privacy

Students' private disability-related information, including medical documentation, accommodation request form responses, and intake interview answers, are confidential and not shared outside of the Office of Accessibility Services. Campus partners, including faculty, will learn about accommodations on a need-to-know basis. Namely, they will be informed about what accommodations are necessary but not why those accommodations are necessary.

Occasionally, there might be a need to collaboratively explore accommodation options for a specific student in a specific course or program. When that is the case, Accessibility Services might describe functional limitations so that faculty, staff, and leadership can design means of accommodation and access. However, diagnoses will never be disclosed unless directly permitted from the student. The Office of Accessibility Services always maintains compliance under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Though Accessibility Services will not reveal students' disability details, students may disclose to anyone at any time personal information that they are comfortable sharing.

Technology, Readings, and Resources

Recommended Reading and Resources

US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. [Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities.](#)



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Jane Jarrow. [An Open Letter to Parents of Students with Disabilities About to Enter College](#). DAIS.

Disability Etiquette – [Wittenberg University's Accessibility Services Proper Etiquette Tips](#).
Wittenberg University.

Guidelines: [Emotional Support Animals under the Fair Housing Act](#). Updated 2020, US
Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Universal Design – [UDL Guidelines](#). CAST.

Visual Accessibility – [Accessible Color Palette Generator](#). Venngage.

Video Captioning – Many free websites and apps are available for captioning, personal
favorites (and perhaps the easiest) are Instagram and YouTube. Additionally, helpful information
can be found at this link: [How to Add Captions & Subtitles to a Video: 8 Easy Methods](#). Riverside.

Document Accessibility – [Make Your Word Document Accessible to People with Disabilities](#).
Microsoft Word.

Assistive Technology

- OneNote: All students have access to OneNote through Microsoft 365. OneNote can produce real-time transcriptions for class lectures.
- [NaturalReader](#): Free website providing text-to-speech conversions of files.
- [RoboBraille](#): Service that will convert a file into an audio or text format; varies between free or small cost.
- [Speechify](#), [Notability](#), and [Genio](#) are services that can help with varying access challenges; all programs have a cost.
 - Interested in using Genio? Connect with Accessibility Services to discuss a free trial.
- Apple Narrator or Windows Voiceover: Free built-in computer software capable of screen reading.
- [Wellness Information](#): The Thomas Library has various technology, gadgets, and spaces available for free.

FAQs

I have testing accommodations – how can I test in COMPASS?

Students can register for testing services by completing [this form](#) for each of their exams. The form must be completed two days before their requested test date. Students should check their email regularly for follow-up information related to their request.



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How often do I need to renew my accommodations?

Students need to renew their accommodations every year (see bottom of page 6).

I saw on page 7 the information about sending faculty the accommodation memo, but I am still nervous. Can I chat with someone about this conversation?

Yes! Any COMPASS staff member can engage in conversation about what to expect during the conversation. We can also do a role-play session so you can practice having the conversation. Remember, if you choose to meet with a COMPASS staff member outside of Accessibility Services you would need to self-disclose to them that you are a student with a disability.

Revised July 2025