Disability Resources for Students

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# **Instructions:**

1. Replace STUDENT NAME with your first and last name in black. You may also include your preferred name in parentheses. Example: Richard “Richie” Parker
2. Replace NAME with the name you would like your professor to use to address you.
3. Choose the appropriate pronoun where you see he is/she is/they are or him/her/them.
4. Follow the instructions in red contained within parentheses and remove them from the letter when you are finished making changes.
5. Remove these instructions from the letter.
6. Return to tmbchnnn@memphis.edu in a word document that is attached. DO NOT create a link, a pdf, or a shared document.

Dear Professor,

I am emailing to introduce you to STUDENT NAME, a student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who is enrolled in your class. If NAME decides to request specific academic accommodations, you will receive a faculty notification email, which will contain information pertaining to those accommodations, as well as information on assisting our office with arranging any needed testing accommodations.

This is NOT an accommodation notice. Rather, the intent of this email is to foster understanding and facilitate communication. Below you will find information that might apply to NAME and tools that may be useful in the classroom for him/her/them, as well as others in the class.

As mentioned previously, NAME has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Students with ASD may be highly intel­ligent, academically gifted, and uniquely qualified to succeed in the intellectual atmosphere of higher education. Regardless of academic strengths, there might be certain aspects of higher education that are more challenging. Below are some specific examples that might be attributed to ASD: (please remove anything that doesn’t apply and feel free to add other descriptors)

* Frequent errors in interpreting others' body language, intentions, or facial expressions
* Problems with getting off topic, particularly when working with peers on group projects
* Stuttering, mutism, or getting distracted during presentations
* Difficulty understanding the motives and perceptions of others
* Difficulty with the big picture, perseveration on the details (can't see the forest for the trees)
* Difficulties with transitions and changes in schedule
* Needing things to be "just so"
* Difficulty with abstract thinking (having more concrete thinking and focusing on details others may view as being off topic; difficulty generalizing)
* Heightened sensitivity to touch, sounds, and visual details; possibility of experiencing sensory overload
* Discomfort with making eye contact
* Difficulty understanding implicit social rules (such as personal space, social nuances, and niceties)
* Literal understanding of language (difficulty interpreting words with double meaning, confused by metaphors, sarcasm, jokes)
* Expressing emotions in a way that others may view as inappropriate

Below are some tips that will promote productive interactions with NAME: (Please make this area specific to you by removing anything that will not be helpful)

* Build rapport with him/her/them. They may feel intimated to approach you first, so feel free to initiate conversations.
* Avoid absolute words such as "always" or "never" unless that is exactly what you mean.
* Allow him/her/them to ask questions to garner a clearer understanding of course content and readings.
* Allow him/her/them to use non-disruptive fidget items in class.
* Make him/her/them aware of group work activities prior to the date of the activity and facilitate understanding of expectations for the activity.
* Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams and when assignments are due. Provide advance notice of any changes.
* Make sure all expectations are direct and explicit. Don't require him/her/them to "read between the lines" to glean your intentions. Don't expect him/her/them to automatical­ly generalize instructions.
* Provide direct feedback to him/her/them when you observe areas of academic difficulty.
* Encourage use of resources designed to help him/her/them with study skills, particularly organizational skills, and counseling.
* Avoid idioms, double meaning, and sarcasm, unless you plan to explain your usage.
* If the need should arise, work with him/her/them to develop a plan for potential behavioral issues and clearly outline acceptable behavior, unacceptable behavior, and consequences for unacceptable behavior.
* Contact the Disability Resource Center with questions or concerns at 901-678-2880.

**You are strongly encouraged to try these suggestions to improve your student’s learning outcomes, but you are not mandated to adhere to all tips listed in this notification.** I greatly appreciate your efforts to further your understanding of NAME and to assist him/her/them in being more successful in your class.

Kind Regards,

Tara Buchannan, Director

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