# Speaking up for your child with disability

## Getting your child what they need from their primary school

### An Easy Read workbook

## How to use this workbook

This workbook was written by:

* people with disability
* families and carers.

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) helped them write this workbook. When you see the word ‘we’, it means the people who wrote this guide.

They wrote this guide for the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE).

We wrote this workbook in an easy to read way.

We have written some words in **bold**.
This means the letters are thicker and darker.

We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of important words we use in this workbook on page 5.

There is a list of other words on page 32.

This Easy Read workbook is a summary of another workbook.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.

You can find the other document on our website.

[www.dese.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/students](http://www.dese.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/students)

You can ask for help to read this workbook. A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

We wrote this workbook to support you.
We hope you find this workbook helpful.

## What’s in this workbook?

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## Words we use in this workbook

We have some words we always use when we talk about the Disability Standards for Education (DSE).

Knowing what these words mean can help you understand how the DSE work.

**Disability**

A disability can affect your:

* brain
* body
* **senses**.

You use your senses to understand the world around you.

When you have a disability, part of your body doesn’t work:

* very well
* how it should.

A disability can affect:

* what you can do
* how much you can do on your own.

A disability can affect how you:

* communicate
* learn
* do things.

**Education**

When you get an education, teachers support you to learn:

* new skills
* knowledge.

**Education provider**

An education provider is somewhere you go to learn.

This could be a:

* pre-school or kindergarten
* primary school
* high school
* university
* training organisation, such as TAFE.

An education provider might be public – it’s run by the government. Or it could be private – another organisation owns and runs it.

**Reasonable adjustment**

When something changes so you can join in, we call it an adjustment.
This is sometimes called an accommodation.

Adjustments can include:

* someone to support you
* doing things in new ways
* changing things.

When something is reasonable, it is:

* fair
* sensible.

Reasonable adjustments are things your education provider must:

* do
* change.

**Rights**

Your rights are rules for how you can expect other people to treat you. This includes education providers.

**Standards**

Standards are what we use to measure how well something is done. We look at:

* what is done
* what the standard is.

Standards help us make sure things work well.

Education providers must:

* reach the standard
* try to do better than the standard.

**Students**

Students are people who learn with an education provider.

This includes when they learn:

* in a classroom
* at home
* at work.

Students can be people:

* with disability
* without disability.

## What is this workbook about?

In this workbook we talk about how to get accommodations for children with disability who go to primary school.

We want your child with disability to get accommodations they need.

This workbook can help you:

* think
* plan.

You can take this workbook to meetings at your child’s school.

## Using this workbook

This workbook:

* is quite long
* has lots of activities for you to do.

It helps if you read the whole workbook before you do any of the activities.

But you don’t need to:

* read the whole workbook all at once
* do all the activities at once.

You can include your child when you:

* think
* plan
* do the activities.

Give your child a chance to make choices about their life at school. If you can, do this while they are young. This can help them take charge of their own life when they’re older.

## What are the Disability Standards for Education (DSE)?

The DSE are standards for the education of students with disability.

The DSE talk about 2 important things:

* the rights of students with disability
* what education providers must do.

We need the DSE to:

* make sure students with disability get an equal chance to learn
* protect the rights of students with disability.

The DSE help education providers understand how to support students with disability.

## Getting accommodations your child needs

Accommodations let your child take part in education.

Your child has the right to get the accommodations they need.

Schools must make accommodations that help their students join in.

But first, they must talk to:

* you
* your child.

Your child’s school should talk to you:

* about how your child’s disability affects them taking part
* before they decide what to do.

Your child’s school should also talk to you about what accommodations:

* they could make
* are reasonable.

You should talk to your child’s school when they **enrol**.

When you enrol, you:

* tell an education provider you want to become a student
* give the education provider information about you.

You should talk to your child’s school again:

* at the start of each school year
* if your child gets a new teacher
* whenever there is a problem.

As your child goes through school, they might need different accommodations. Or the accommodations might:

* not work
* need to change.

What they need when they start primary school won’t be the same as when they leave.

You might not know what accommodations the school should make. That’s ok. It’s not your job to have all the answers.

The school will have ideas about things that have worked well for other students.

You might ask someone who:

* already works with your child
* knows your child well.

They might have ideas about what would work well for your child.

## Setting a goal

### Ask yourself

Think about what you want your child to get from going to school.

Ask yourself:

Why do I want accommodations for my child?

What do I hope will happen?

What is my child good at?

What does my child like doing?

**My goals are:**

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

### Ask your child

Ask your child what they want.

Think about:

* your child’s age
* how they communicate.

You want to know what:

* it’s like for them to take part in school
* doing well means for them.

**Questions you might ask**

What does it look like when you take part at school?

What does it feel like when you take part at school?

What makes a day at school a good day?

What do you want for the future?

What are you good at?

What do you like doing?

### Support your child to answer

Talk to your child.

Show your child words or pictures to help them communicate.

You might help your child:

* draw a picture
* write a story.

You know your child best.

You might come up with another way.

**Write or draw in this box:**

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

### Talk about which goals are right for your child

Put your ideas and your child’s ideas together.

Come up with some goals for your child to reach.

For example:

Joshua loves making up stories.

**Joshua’s goal**

Find more ways for Joshua to:

* write stories
* share stories.

**Our shared goals are:**

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

### Write down your goals

You might have more than one goal you want your child to reach.

Set as many goals for your child as you want.

Write them down.

You might share these goals with your child’s school.

**My child’s goals are:**

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

## Talking to your child’s school

Under the DSE, schools must do 3 things:

* meet with you and your child
* make accommodations
* make sure your child is treated well.

Let your child join you when you meet with the school.

Support them if they want to take part.

If you include them while they’re young, they can take part more when they’re older.

Your child can tell you what makes it hard for them to take part at school.

Your child can give you ideas about:

* what to talk about in meetings
* accommodations the school could make.

## Talking to your child

You will talk to your child a lot while they are in primary school.

Sometimes you might plan:

* when you talk to your child
* what you will talk about.

Other times it will just happen.

Every child:

* is different
* will have their own way they like to communicate.

Your child might change how they communicate as they get older.

Here are some ideas about how to talk to your child.

**Choose the right time to talk to your child.**

Does your child want to talk?

If they don’t want to talk, do you know why?

Is your child in the right mood?

Are they:

* busy?
* stressed?

Do you both have enough energy?

**Use words your child:**

* **knows**
* **understands.**

Communicate with your child in a way you know works well.

If your child hasn’t started school yet, use words and ideas they already know.

**Watch how your child behaves.**

**Look out for what:**

* **works well**
* **doesn’t work well.**

How your child behaves can help you understand how they feel.

It might take your child time to get used to something new.

The things you change might not work.

You can:

* try something else
* change things back.

**Support your child to speak up about what they need.**

Support them to:

* use words they know
* say what they need.

Listen when they talk about:

* their ideas
* what they think
* what they need.

**Let your child take charge of their own life more as they get older.**

This might take a long time.

Think about what is right for your child.

Help your child believe in:

* themselves
* what they can do on their own.

Support your child to speak up about what they need.

**Support your child to be who they really are.**

How does your child:

* see themself?
* talk about themself?

Talk about your child the way they:

* like
* choose.

Think about who they are as a person, not just about their disability.

**Think about:**

* **when to include other people**
* **how to include other people.**

Everyone deserves a chance to feel:

* included
* like they belong.

Are there things you should talk to other people about?

Are there things you should keep private?

## Talking about accommodations

You can talk to your child about the accommodations they might need at school.

Help them understand:

* their right to take part and do well at school
* their teacher is there to help them
* getting the support they need is a good thing.

Remind them:

* having accommodations is a good thing
* everyone learns and plays differently
* their accommodation might help other students
* other students will have accommodations too.

Talk to them in a way you know works well.

You could say:

“I want you to have fun and learn at school.

This will help make school better for you.

This will help you join in with your friends.”

You might use pictures.

Show them what might change.

You might use stories.

Make up a story about:

* your child’s experiences
* the accommodations they need
* how things change.

Ask your child questions about the story.

Make sure they understand.

You might use a **social story**.

A social story uses words and pictures to show you how something works.

It has words that are easy to understand.

It might use photos of real people and places.

Or it might use drawings instead.

You might:

* use role play
* act out what might happen.

## What stops your child taking part?

A **barrier** is something that makes it harder for your child to:

* join in
* take part.

It’s important to first work out what barriers your child faces. Then you and the school can work out how to take these barriers away.

Your child has the right to take part in every area of school life.

Think about what barriers they might face in all the different areas.

Are there barriers that stop your child:

* going to different places in the school?
* using different spaces?

Is it easy for your child to get to, or use:

* other classrooms?
* the playground?
* the toilets?

Can your child:

* make friends?
* work in groups with other children?

Can your child learn in a classroom when it‘s:

* busy?
* active?
* noisy?

What learning challenges does your child face?

What stops your child from learning?

What skills does your child:

* have now?
* still need to learn?

What communication challenges does your child face? What stops your child from communicating?

Can your child take part in school events?

This might include:

* assemblies
* swimming and other sports activities
* excursions – trips away from school to support what the students are learning about
* camps.

Remember, your child is an expert in their own life. They can help you understand the barriers they face at school.

**Write or draw in this box:**

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

You can write down what you find out about the barriers your child faces in the table below.

| **Area of school life** | **Barrier** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Places and spaces at the school | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Making friends and working with other children | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Learning | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Communicating | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| School events | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

## Coming up with ideas

You can use this part of the workbook to come up with ideas for accommodations the school could make for your child.

Think about the:

* goals you set
* barriers your child faces.

You can find good ideas in lots of different places.

You might ask:

* the school
* someone who already works with your child
* other parents of children with disability.

You can find good ideas:

* online
* from social media.

But make sure you can trust the information you find.

Focus on what your child needs.

You might need to support your child’s teacher to make an accommodation work.

You might need to change an accommodation if it doesn’t work.

Give your child a chance to make choices about their life at school.

You can support your child to speak up for themselves about what they need as they get older.

You can write your ideas in the table below.

| **Barrier** | **Ideas for accommodations** |
| --- | --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

Remember, your child is an expert in their own life.

They can help you come up with ideas for accommodations too.

**Write or draw in this box:**

|  |
| --- |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |

## Putting it all together

Fill out the table below.

In the ‘Use’ column, you can tick the box for:

* Yes
* No.

You can take this table to meetings at your child’s school.

| **Area of school life** | **Accommodations** | **Use** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Places and spaces at the school | Click or tap here to enter text. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Making friends and working with other children | Click or tap here to enter text. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Learning | Click or tap here to enter text. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Communicating | Click or tap here to enter text. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| School events | Click or tap here to enter text. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No | Click or tap here to enter text. |

## Next steps

When you have filled out this workbook, you should:

* have something you can use
* be ready to meet with your child’s school.

You can take this workbook to meetings at your child’s school.

The next step is to set up the meeting.

Use the table below to plan for that meeting.

| **What do I need to think about?** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- |
| Who will be in the meeting? | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| What is the meeting about? | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| What do I want to get from this meeting? | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| What do I need to take to this meeting? | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| What documents about my child’s disability do I need to take?  | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| How can I include my child in the meeting? | Click or tap here to enter text. |

Your child’s school might have already worked with:

* your child
* other children who need the same things.

They might:

* already have their own ideas
* need more information
* try to work out a different accommodation for your child.

Your child’s school might be able to make some accommodations straight away.

But other accommodations might take a while.

The school might have to apply for money to help pay for the accommodations.

Schools need to make accommodations for your child. It says this in the DSE.

Sometimes schools can’t make the accommodations you:

* want
* ask for.

But the school must have very good reasons.

Your education provider doesn’t have to make adjustments that are:

* not reasonable
* too hard for them to make.

But they must prove why an adjustment is too hard for them to make.

## Word list

**This list explains what the bold words in this document mean.**

**Barrier**

A barrier is something that makes it harder for your child to:

* join in
* take part.

**Enrol**

When you enrol, you:

* tell an education provider you want to become a student
* give the education provider information about you.

**Social story**

A social story uses words and pictures to show you how something works.

It has words that are easy to understand.

It might use photos of real people and places.

Or it might use drawings instead.

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