

# Welcome to the Transition Roadmap to Postsecondary Education!

## In the roadmap you'll find:

- Goals and action steps to help guide your transition to education after high school
- Links to extra resources for more information
- Words in blue. These are terms that you may hear often when learning about employment. If you click on a blue word, you'll see its definition. There's also a complete glossary of all the terms at the end of the Roadmap.

## **Some support**

means that support is not needed for most daily activities.

## **Moderate support**

means daily support is needed for some but not all daily activities.

## **Intensive support**

means that hourly support is needed for most daily activities.

[Read more](#)

Some Support • Ages 10-14 • Goal:

# Develop Strengths and Self-Advocacy



## Action step 1.

### Develop schoolwork and study skills.

Skills like [organization](#) and [time management](#) are keys to success at school. These skills sometimes are called [executive functioning skills](#). If you're autistic, these skills can be challenging. Supports like [visual prompts](#) and checklists may help you with things like:

- Remembering to turn in homework
- Scheduling your work on different assignments
- Studying
- Taking notes

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about executive functioning](#)
- [From Parent Toolkit on the teenage brain and executive function](#)

### Words to know

executive functioning skills

organizational skills

time management

visual prompt

## Action step 2.

### Find tools and supports that can help in school.

You may need different tools for different classes at school. Having many [supports](#) to choose from, like [scripts](#) or [sensory items](#), can help you be successful. Talk to your parents and teachers if you need help.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about visual supports and autism](#)

### Words to know

script

sensory item

supports





### Action step 3.

## Participate in education and IEP meetings.

You have a voice in your education, including at [IEP](#) or [504 plan](#) meetings. At these meetings you and the [IEP team](#) make decisions about your education. You can share your:

- Goals
- Ideas
- Opinions
- Requests for support
- Special interests

To get ready for the [IEP meeting](#):

- Ask team members what will happen at the meeting
- Plan what you want to share or ask for
- Ask for [accommodations](#) you need for the meeting

## Resources

- [The Autism Speaks Guide to IEPs](#)
- [From Understood about IEPs](#)

## Words to know

504 plan

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

#### Action step 4.

### Develop self-advocacy skills at school.

**Self-advocacy** is an important skill for people with autism. It means asking for what you need to help you learn and be successful. The classroom is a place where you can learn these skills.

You can ask to include self-advocacy goals in your IEP so that teachers will help you learn:

- How to identify your strengths and challenges
- How to identify sensory or social **accommodations** you need and ask for them
- How to ask for help when you need it

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about teaching your child self-advocacy.](#)
- [From Psychology Today about being a self-advocate](#)

### Words to know

accommodations

self-advocacy



Some Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal:

# Make a Transition Plan

## Action step 1.

### Think about options for high school.

High school options include:

- Graduating with a [diploma](#) or a [certificate](#)
- Graduating in four years
- Staying in special education longer, up to age 22
- Going to [vocational education](#) or [trade school](#)

Talking about these options can help you:

- Set goals
- Decide what classes to take
- Decide what supports you need to help you reach your goals after high school

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about the general transition to adulthood](#)
- [From The Center for Autism Research about options after high school](#)

### Words to know

certificate

diploma

trade school

vocational education



## Action step 2.

### Think about options after high school.

After high school, you may:

- Want to get a job
- Want to go to college or another kind of school
- Need time and help to figure out what you want to do

Thinking about what you want to do after high school can help you plan for your time in high school.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about the transition process](#)
- [From The Center for Autism Research on comparing employment and college](#)





### Action step 3.

## Prepare for college entrance exams.

If your goal is to go to college, you may need to take a [college entrance exam](#), like the SAT or the ACT. If you have an IEP or 504 plan, you can ask for accommodations. Getting help from a tutor and taking practice tests can help you get ready for the test.

## Resources

- [From ACT about testing accommodations for people with disabilities](#)
- [From College Board about testing accommodations for people with disabilities](#)
- [From The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia about post-secondary admissions assessments](#)

## Words to know

[college entrance exam](#)



Some Support • Ages 16-18 • Goal:

# Choose a Program



## Action step 1.

### Look at postsecondary programs.

Postsecondary programs include:

- Apprenticeships
- Community colleges
- Cooperative education
- Day habilitation
- Employment readiness training
- Four-year colleges and universities
- Gap-year programs
- Life skills or independent living programs
- Vocational education or trade school

Most communities have programs like these for students with and without disabilities.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Resource Guide about postsecondary education](#)
- [From Education USA about community college](#)
- [From the Gap Year Association about gap year programs](#)
- [From NPR about autistic students attending college](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor on apprenticeships](#)

### Words to know

apprenticeship

community college

cooperative education

day habilitation

employment readiness training

four-year college or university

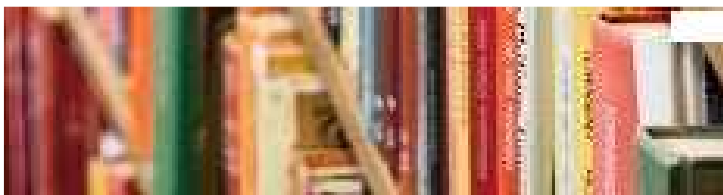
gap year program

independent living program

life skills

postsecondary

trade school



Action step 2.

### Think about your personal preferences.

When looking at post-secondary programs, think about:

- How many students go there?
- How far is it from where you live?
- What kinds of [supports](#) are available?

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about choosing the best postsecondary program](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education questions and answers](#)

### Words to know

supports



A top-down photograph of a person's hands working at a wooden desk. The person is using a black and white scientific calculator, with their right hand on the keypad. The calculator's display shows the number 1542. To the left of the calculator is a white sticky note. In the bottom left corner, a blue folder or document is partially visible. The person is wearing a black watch on their left wrist. The desk surface is a light-colored wood.

### Action step 3.

## Look at and apply for funding.

Now that you've got some program options, it's time to find out about funding. Education programs can be expensive. But there are ways to help pay for some or all of it. Look into things like:

- [Apprenticeships](#)
- [Government student loans](#), including the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#)
- [Grants](#)
- [Internships](#)
- [Scholarships](#)
- [Vocational rehabilitation](#)

Funding options may have different requirements. Keep a list of what you need for each kind of funding to help you decide what works best for you.

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about how to easily apply for financial aid](#)
- [From College Scholarships about autism-related scholarships](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about FAFSA](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about financial aid for people with disabilities](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about types of funding for school](#)

## Words to know

apprenticeship

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

government student loan

grant

internship

scholarship

vocational rehabilitation

#### Action step 4.

### Make sure your evaluations are up to date.

If you need [accommodations](#) after high school, you need a current IEP, 504 plan or medical evaluation. Most postsecondary programs accept plans or evaluations that have been completed within the past three years.

If you need to schedule a medical evaluation, don't wait! It can take months to get it scheduled, several days to complete and weeks to get results.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)

### Words to know

[accommodations](#)



Some Support • Ages 18-22 • Goal:

# Transition to a Postsecondary Program



### Action step 1.

## Even out your skill sets.

Many people with autism have uneven skill sets. For example, you may have strong reading and math skills. But you may need time and support to develop other skills, like:

- [Life skills](#), like shopping, meal planning, using transportation and time management
- [Organization](#)
- [Self-regulation](#)

To focus on building skills, you may want to:

- Live at home and [commute](#) to your program for classes or training.
- Take just a few classes.
- If you don't have a high school diploma, get a [general education diploma \(GED\)](#).

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks on life skills and autism](#)
- [From the Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on emotional regulation](#)
- [From Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on life skills for kids with autism](#)
- [From the Autism Support Network on teaching organizational skills](#)
- [From GED Testing Service about the GED](#)

## Words to know

commute

general education diploma (GED)

life skills

organizational skills

self-regulation

## Action step 2.

### Take another look at plans for after high school.

As you grow, your interests, skills and [support](#) needs may change. Plans you made a few years ago may not make as much sense now.

It's smart to take a new look at plans, choices and decisions. And it's OK to change them if that's what's best for you now.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)
- [From Indiana University on thinking about postsecondary education](#)

### Words to know

supports







### Action step 3.

## Find out about student services at the program you choose.

Student services are different after high school. Programs after high school don't have [special education services](#) or [IEPs](#). Instead, you have to find out about student services on your own.

Contact the program's student services office to find out about [accommodations](#). Most programs provide accommodations like:

- Extended testing times
- Extended time for turning in assignments and papers
- Help with taking notes
- A single [dorm room](#)

## Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)
- [From the Center for Autism Research Autism Roadmap on accommodations in higher education](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Education on preparing students with disabilities for post-secondary education](#)

## Words to know

accommodations

dorm room

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

special education services

#### Action step 4.

### Transition to a postsecondary program.

Before you can start a program, you may need documents like:

- A medical evaluation
- A recent IEP or [504 plan](#) (within the last 3 years)
- Consent forms that allow the school or program to contact your parents

As you start your program, you may need additional support with things like [time management](#), [organization](#) and self-care. Your needs may change over time. So review your supports often so you have what you need for success.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)

### Words to know

504 plan

organizational skills

time management



Moderate Support • Ages 10-14 • Goal:

# Develop Strengths and Self-Advocacy



## Action step 1.

### Identify supports needed for schoolwork and studying.

Skills like [organization](#) and [time management](#) are keys to success at school. These skills sometimes are called [executive functioning skills](#). If you're autistic, these skills can be challenging. Supports like checklists and [visual prompts](#) can help you focus on learning. They also help prepare you for later when schoolwork gets harder.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about executive functioning](#)
- [From Parent Toolkit on the teenage brain and executive function](#)

### Words to know

executive functioning skills

organizational skills

time management

visual prompt

## Action step 2.

### Use and adjust tools and supports in school.

You may need to adjust tools and [supports](#) depending on classes and situations at school that can help you be successful. You may have to try a few to see what works best. Talk to your parents and teachers if you need help. Tools and supports can include:

- [Reward charts](#)
- [Scripts](#)
- [Sensory items](#)
- [Visual schedules](#)

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about visual supports and autism](#)

### Words to know

reward chart

script

sensory item

supports

visual schedule





### Action step 3.

## Participate in education and IEP meetings.

You have a voice in your education, including at [IEP](#) or [504 plan](#) meetings. At these meetings you and the [IEP team](#) make decisions about your education. You can share your:

- Goals
- Ideas
- Opinions
- Requests for support
- Special interests

To get ready for the [IEP meeting](#):

- Ask team members what will happen at the meeting
- Plan what you want to share or ask for
- Ask for [accommodations](#) you need for the meeting

## Resources

- [The Autism Speaks Guide to IEPs](#)
- [From Understood about IEPs](#)

## Words to know

504 plan

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

#### Action step 4.

### Develop self-advocacy skills at school.

**Self-advocacy** is an important skill for people with autism. It means asking for what you need to help you learn and be successful. The classroom is a place where you can learn these skills.

You can ask to include self-advocacy goals in your IEP so that teachers will help you learn:

- How to identify your strengths and challenges
- How to identify sensory or social **accommodations** you need and ask for them
- How to ask for help when you need it

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about teaching your child self-advocacy.](#)
- [From Psychology Today about being a self-advocate](#)

### Words to know

accommodations

self-advocacy



Moderate Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal:

# Make a Transition Plan

## Action step 1.

### Think about options for high school.

High school options include:

- Learning in separate classrooms or being in regular classes with support
- Graduating with a [diploma](#) or a [certificate](#)
- Graduating in four years
- Staying in special education longer, up to age 22
- Going to [vocational education](#) or [trade school](#)

Talking about these options can help you:

- Set goals
- Decide what classes to take
- Decide what supports you need to help you reach your goals after high school

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about the general transition to adulthood](#)
- [From The Center for Autism Research about options after high school](#)

### Words to know

certificate

diploma

trade school

vocational education



Action step 2.

## Participate in IEP transition planning meetings.

Education after high school is part of [IEP transition planning](#). This planning begins at age 14-16, depending on the laws in your state. You work with your [IEP team](#) to make a plan that fits with your goals for the future.

IEP transition planning empowers you for the future with knowledge about your strengths, challenges and [self-advocacy](#).

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about the transition process](#)
- [From Understood about IEP transition planning](#)

### Words to know

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning

self-advocacy





Moderate Support • Ages 16-18 • Goal:

# Choose a Program



### Action step 1.

## Look at local postsecondary programs.

Postsecondary programs include:

- Apprenticeships
- Community colleges
- Cooperative education
- Day habilitation
- Employment readiness training
- Four-year colleges and universities
- Gap-year programs
- Life skills or independent living programs
- Vocational education or trade school

Most communities have programs like these for students with and without disabilities. Look for programs with that have supports you need to help you meet your goals.

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Resource Guide about postsecondary education](#)
- [From Education USA about community college](#)
- [From the Gap Year Association about gap year programs](#)
- [From NPR about autistic students attending college](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor on apprenticeships](#)

## Words to know

apprenticeship

community college

cooperative education

day habilitation program

employment readiness training

four-year college or university

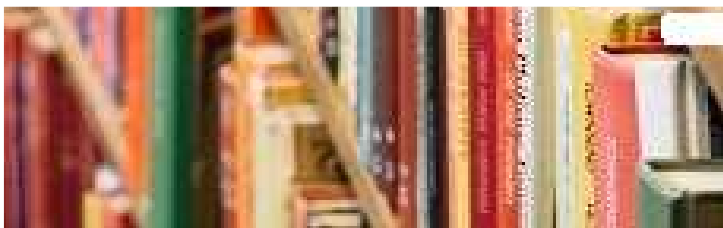
gap year program

independent living program

life skills

postsecondary

trade school



### Action step 2.

## Think about your personal preferences.

When looking at post-secondary programs, think about:

- How many students go there?
- How far is it from where you live?
- What kinds of [supports](#) are available?

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about choosing the best postsecondary program](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education resources](#)

## Words to know

supports



A top-down photograph of a person's hands working at a wooden desk. The person is using a black and white scientific calculator, with their right hand on the keypad. The calculator's display shows the number 1542. To the right of the calculator is a small white sticky note. In the foreground, a blue folder or document is open, showing some text. A silver watch is visible on the person's left wrist. The background includes a pen and some papers.

### Action step 3.

## Look at and apply for funding.

Now that you've got some program options, it's time to find out about funding. Education programs can be expensive. But there are ways to help pay for some or all of it. Look into things like:

- [Apprenticeships](#)
- [Government student loans](#), including the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#)
- [Grants](#)
- [Internships](#)
- [Scholarships](#)
- [Vocational rehabilitation](#)

Funding options may have different requirements. Keep a list of what you need for each kind of funding to help you decide what works best for you.

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about how to easily apply for financial aid](#)
- [From College Scholarships about autism-related scholarships](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about FAFSA](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about financial aid for people with disabilities](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about types of funding for school](#)

## Words to know

apprenticeship

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

government student loan

grant

internship

scholarship

vocational rehabilitation

#### Action step 4.

### Make sure your evaluations are up to date.

If you need [accommodations](#) after high school, you need a current IEP, 504 plan or medical evaluation. Most postsecondary programs accept plans or evaluations that have been completed within the past three years.

If you need to schedule a medical evaluation, don't wait! It can take months to get it scheduled, several days to complete and weeks to get results.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)

### Words to know

[accommodations](#)



Moderate Support • Ages 18-22 • Goal:

# Transition to a Postsecondary Program



### Action step 1.

## Think about your skill sets.

Many people with autism have uneven skill sets. For example, you may have strong reading and math skills. But you may need time and support to develop other skills, like:

- [Organization](#)
- [Self-regulation](#)

Some of these skills may take longer to develop than others. To give you the time you need, you may want to:

- Stay in [special education](#) longer, up to age 22
- Take more than four years to get a [high school diploma](#)
- If you don't have a high school diploma, get a [general education diploma \(GED\)](#).
- Work with a [tutor](#)
- Take [college prep courses](#)

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks on life skills and autism](#)
- [From the Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on emotional regulation](#)
- [From Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on life skills for kids with autism](#)
- [From the Autism Support Network on teaching organizational skills](#)
- [From GED Testing Service about the GED](#)

## Words to know

college prep course

diploma

general education diploma (GED)

organizational skills

self-regulation

special education

tutor

## Action step 2.

### Take another look at plans for after high school.

As you grow, your interests, skills and [support](#) needs may change. Plans you made a few years ago may not make as much sense now.

It's smart to take a new look at plans, choices and decisions. And it's OK to change them if that's what's best for you now.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)
- [From Indiana University on thinking about postsecondary education](#)

### Words to know

supports







### Action step 3.

## Choose a program with the right supports and accommodations.

Student services are different after high school. You can contact a program's student services office to find out how to request [accommodations](#) like:

- Getting extra time for tests or written assignments
- Help with taking notes

Some colleges have programs designed for autistic students or for students with learning disabilities. These provide support with your schoolwork and with [social](#) and [life skills](#).

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)
- [From the Center for Autism Research Autism Roadmap on accommodations in higher education](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Education on preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary education](#)

### Words to know

accommodations

life skills

social skills

#### Action step 4.

### Transition to a postsecondary program.

Before you can start a program, you may need documents like:

- A medical evaluation
- A recent IEP or [504 plan](#) (within the last 3 years)
- Consent forms that allow the school or program to contact your parents

As you start your program, you may need additional support with things like [time management](#), [organization](#) and self-care. Your needs may change over time. So review your supports often so you have what you need for success.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)

### Words to know

504 plan

organizational skills

time management



Intensive Support • Ages 10-14 • Goal:

# Develop Strengths and Self-Advocacy



## Action step 1.

### Use supports to help structure schoolwork.

You may need help creating a structure to help you learn. If you're having trouble meeting certain goals, supports like [reward charts](#), [token systems](#) and [choice boards](#) can help you with skills like:

- [Organization](#)
- [Planning](#)
- [Time management](#)

Learning to use supports now can help you prepare for later when schoolwork gets harder.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about executive functioning](#)
- [From Parent Toolkit on the teenage brain and executive function](#)

### Words to know

choice board

organizational skills

reward chart

time management

token system

## Action step 2.

### Use and adjust tools and supports in school.

You may need to adjust tools and [supports](#) depending on classes and situations at school that can help you be successful. You may have to try a few to see what works best. Talk to your parents and teachers if you need help. Tools and supports can include:

- [Reward charts](#)
- [Scripts](#)
- [Sensory items](#)
- [Visual schedules](#)

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about visual supports and autism](#)

### Words to know

reward chart

script

sensory item

supports

visual schedule





### Action step 3.

## Think about how to be involved in your IEP meetings.

Many students don't know they have an [IEP team](#) to help them be successful at school. You can be a part of the IEP team and help make decisions about your education. At [IEP meetings](#) you can:

- Meet other team members
- Share your special interests and successes
- Share your goals for the future

To get ready for the meeting:

- Ask team members what will happen at the meeting
- Plan what you want to share or ask for
- Ask for [accommodations](#) you need for the meeting

## Resources

- [The Autism Speaks Guide to IEPs](#)
- [From Understood about IEPs](#)

## Words to know

accommodations

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

#### Action step 4.

### Develop self-advocacy skills at school.

**Self-advocacy** is an important skill for people with autism. It means asking for what you need to help you learn and be successful. School is a place where you can learn and practice this skill.

To ask for what you want and need to be successful in school:

- Use your preferred communication method
- Think about **supports** you need and ask for them
- Learn how to ask for help when you need it

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about teaching your child self-advocacy](#)
- [From Psychology Today about being a self-advocate](#)

### Words to know

self-advocacy

supports



Intensive Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal:

# Make a Transition Plan



## Action step 1.

### Think about options for high school.

High school options include:

- Learning in separate classrooms or being in regular classes with support
- Graduating with a [diploma](#) or a [certificate](#)
- Graduating in four years
- Staying in special education longer, up to age 22

Your options and choices may change as your needs and goals change over time.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about the general transition to adulthood](#)
- [From The Center for Autism Research about options after high school](#)

### Words to know

certificate

diploma

## Action step 2.

### Participate in IEP transition planning meetings.

Education after high school is part of [IEP transition planning](#). This planning begins at age 14-16, depending on the laws in your state.

You can be part of the planning. You can help the [IEP team](#) make the plan fit your goals for the future. This can help you:

- Learn about supports you may need
- Practice [self-advocacy](#)

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about the transition process](#)
- [From Understood about IEP transition planning](#)

### Words to know

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning

self-advocacy







### Action step 3.

## Prepare for college entrance exams.

If your goal is to go to college, you may need to take a [college entrance exam](#), like the SAT or the ACT. If you have an IEP or 504 plan, you can ask for accommodations on the day of the exam. Getting help from a tutor and taking practice tests can help you get ready for the test.

You may be able to get [accommodations](#) during the test, including communication support.

## Resources

- [From ACT about testing accommodations for people with disabilities](#)
- [From College Board about testing accommodations for people with disabilities](#)
- [From The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia about post-secondary admissions assessments](#)

## Words to know

[accommodations](#)

[college entrance exam](#)

Intensive Support • Ages 16-18 • Goal:

# Choose a Program



### Action step 1.

## Look at local postsecondary programs.

Postsecondary programs include:

- Apprenticeships
- Community colleges
- Cooperative education
- Day habilitation
- Employment readiness training
- Four-year colleges and universities
- Gap-year programs
- Life skills or independent living programs
- Vocational education or trade school

Most communities have programs like these for students with and without disabilities. Look for programs with that have supports you need to help you meet your goals.

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Resource Guide about postsecondary education](#)
- [From Education USA about community college](#)
- [From the Gap Year Association about gap year programs](#)
- [From NPR about autistic students attending college](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor on apprenticeships](#)

### Words to know

apprenticeship

community college

cooperative education

day habilitation program

employment readiness training

four-year college or university

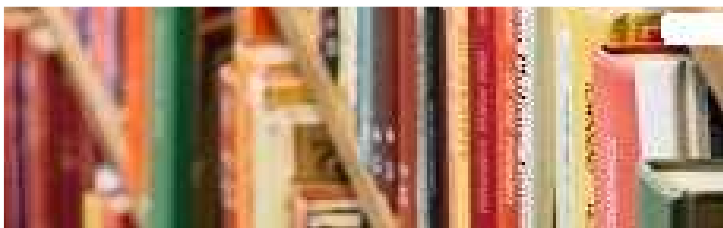
gap year program

independent living program

life skills

postsecondary

trade school



Action step 2.

### Think about your personal preferences.

When looking at post-secondary programs, think about:

- How many students go there?
- How far is it from where you live?
- What kinds of [supports](#) are available?

### Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about choosing the best postsecondary program](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education resources](#)

### Words to know

supports





### Action step 3.

## Look at and apply for funding.

Now that you've got some program options, it's time to find out about funding. Education programs can be expensive. But there are ways to help pay for some or all of it. Look into things like:

- [Apprenticeships](#)
- [Government student loans](#), including the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#)
- [Grants](#)
- [Internships](#)
- [Scholarships](#)
- [Vocational rehabilitation](#)

Funding options may have different requirements. Keep a list of what you need for each kind of funding to help you decide what works best for you.

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about how to easily apply for financial aid](#)
- [From College Scholarships about autism-related scholarships](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about FAFSA](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about financial aid for people with disabilities](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about types of funding for school](#)

## Words to know

apprenticeship

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

government student loan

grant

internship

scholarship

vocational rehabilitation

#### Action step 4.

### Make sure your evaluations are up to date.

If you need [accommodations](#) after high school, you need a current IEP, 504 plan or medical evaluation. Most postsecondary programs accept plans or evaluations that have been completed within the past three years.

If you need to schedule a medical evaluation, don't wait! It can take months to get it scheduled, several days to complete and weeks to get results.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)

### Words to know

accommodations



Intensive Support • Ages 18-22 • Goal:

# **Transition to a Postsecondary Program**



### Action step 1.

## Think about your skill sets.

Many people with autism have uneven skill sets. For example, you may have strong reading and math skills. But you may need time and support to develop other skills, like:

- [Organization](#)
- [Self-regulation](#)

Some of these skills may take longer to develop than others. To give you the time you need, you may want to:

- Stay in special education longer, up to age 22
- Take more than four years to get a [high school diploma](#)
- If you don't have a high school diploma, get a [general education diploma \(GED\)](#).
- Work with a [tutor](#)
- Do [home school](#)
- Take [college prep courses](#)

## Resources

- [From Autism Speaks on life skills and autism](#)
- [From the Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on emotional regulation](#)
- [From Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on life skills for kids with autism](#)
- [From the Autism Support Network on teaching organizational skills](#)
- [From GED Testing Service about the GED](#)

## Words to know

college prep course

diploma

general education diploma (GED)

home school

organizational skills

self-regulation

tutor



## Action step 2.

### Take another look at plans for after high school.

As you grow, your interests, skills and [support](#) needs may change. Plans you made a few years ago may not make as much sense now.

It's smart to take a new look at plans, choices and decisions. And it's OK to change them if that's what's best for you now.

### Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)
- [From Indiana University on thinking about postsecondary education](#)

### Words to know

supports





### Action step 3.

## Choose a program that offers the right accommodations.

Student services are different after high school. Programs after high school don't have special education services or IEPs.

Some programs welcome students who need intensive support services, like a one-to-one aid. You may need to arrange and pay for these services on your own.

Some colleges have programs designed for autistic students or for students with learning disabilities. These provide support with your schoolwork and with [social](#) and [life skills](#).

## Resources

- [Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)
- [From the Center for Autism Research Autism Roadmap on accommodations in higher education](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Education on preparing students with disabilities for post-secondary education](#)

## Words to know

accommodations

life skills

social skills

#### Action step 4.

### Transition to a postsecondary program.

Before you can start a program, you may need documents like:

- A medical evaluation
- A recent IEP or [504 plan](#) (within the last 3 years)
- Consent forms that allow the school or program to contact your parents

As you start your program, you may need additional support with things like [time management](#), [organization](#) and self-care. Your needs may change over time. So review your supports often so you have what you need for success.

### Words to know

504 plan

organizational skills

time management



# Glossary



## 504 plan.

A plan that identifies accommodations (changes or adjustments) that a student with a disability needs to be successful at school. Students with a 504 plan don't receive an IEP or special education services. Students who don't qualify for an IEP may qualify for a 504 plan.



## accommodations.

Changes or adjustments that help meet a person's individual needs. Examples include getting extra time to do assignments or take tests, taking a test orally instead of in writing and working one-on-one with a teacher.

## alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

Methods of communication for people who can't use speech (talking) to communicate; examples include sign language and using a computer for speech.

## apprenticeship.

Training in a trade or craft that includes paid work and on-the-job training with a skilled mentor.

## C

### **choice board.**

A learning tool that gives students choices about how they learn. They often look like a tic-tac-toe board with nine squares. Students can make choices about learning activities and then mark them on the board. They may make choices in a row or by color or choose them at random.

### **college entrance exam.**

A test that colleges use to see if they want to admit you. Examples include the SAT and the ACT.

### **college prep courses.**

Classes to help you get ready for the kind of coursework you'll have in college.

### **community college.**

Two-year education programs for associate degrees. Community colleges also have technical and vocational education programs. They're often less expensive than four-year colleges and universities.

### **commute.**

Travel to work or school.

### **cooperative education.**

Combines classroom learning and on-the-job training.

## D

### **daily living skills.**

Also called life skills or independent living skills. Skills that you need to manage your everyday life. Examples include self-care, home care, cooking and managing money and time.

### **day habilitation program.**

Also called life skills or independent living skills. Skills that you need to manage your everyday life. Examples include self-care, home care, cooking and managing money and time.

### **dorm room.**

A room in a dormitory. A dormitory is a building that has many separate sleeping rooms. You may have a single dorm room. Or you may share a dorm room with others.



## E

### **employment readiness training.**

A program that helps you develop skills and behaviors, like communication, problem-solving and time management, needed to get and keep a job.

### **executive functioning skills.**

Skills that help you stay organized and respond to situations. They help you with things like planning, paying attention and managing time.



## F

### **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The application you complete to apply for financial aid from the federal government. Many states, colleges and private organizations use your FAFSA information to see if you qualify for financial aid.

### **four-year colleges and universities.**

Education programs designed to take four years to complete.



## G

### **gap year program.**

A program often between high school and college that helps you explore your interests to learn about yourself and what you may want to do long term. Programs often include travel and living in another country. Programs may include volunteer work or you may work for pay.

### **general education diploma (GED).**

Also called general educational development. A diploma for people who don't finish high school. You have to take and pass a test to get your GED.

### **grant.**

Money to help you pay for school that usually you don't have to pay back. Organizations that offer education grants include federal and state governments, colleges and universities and nonprofit organizations.



### high school certificate.

A document that says that you've completed high school but you haven't met all the class and grade requirements to graduate.

### high school diploma.

A document from a school that says you have met all the class and grade requirements to graduate.



### independent living program.

Training to help people with disabilities get ready to live as independently as possible.

### Individualized Education Program (IEP).

A plan that identifies programs, goals, services and supports to make sure a student with a disability gets a free and appropriate education at school.

### Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

A meeting that must happen at least once a year to make sure a student's IEP has the right programs, goals and services to get the appropriate education at school.

### Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

The team that works on an IEP to make sure it meets a student's needs. The team can include the student, parents, teachers, a school district representative and service providers, like a speech therapist or an occupational therapist.

### Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning.

Goals in a student's IEP that help plan for life after high school. Schools must measure and report on the goals.

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A U.S. law that makes sure that students with disabilities get free and appropriate education in public schools that meets their individual needs.

### intensive support.

See levels of support. Hourly support needed for most daily activities.



### levels of support.

Some support: Support not needed for most daily activities.

Moderate support: Daily support needed for some but not all daily activities.

Intensive support: Hourly support needed for most daily activities.

### life skills.

Also called daily living or independent living skills. Skills that you need to manage your everyday life. Examples include self-care, home care, cooking and managing money and time.



### mentor.

Someone who teaches you or gives you help or advice.

### minimally verbal.

Someone who uses mostly gestures or single words to communicate.

### moderate support.

See levels of support. Daily support needed for some but not all daily activities.

### motivation.

Wanting to do something.



### organizational skills.

Skills that can help you plan and complete a task. Examples include using checklists and planners and having a set time to study each day.





P

### postsecondary.

After high school.

### preference.

What you like or want more than something else.



R

### reward chart.

A chart that lists goals and progress you make toward reaching them.

When you reach a goal, you get a reward. For example, if your goal is to finish your homework each day for a week, you get a sticker or checkmark on the chart each day you finish homework. If you get a sticker or checkmark each day, you get a reward at the end of the week.

S

### **self-advocacy.**

Being able to communicate your needs and preferences to others. It includes understanding your needs and legal rights, knowing what help and support you need, and communicating your needs to others.

### **self-regulation.**

Taking action to deal with challenging emotions or behavior or sensory discomfort. For example, you may count or take deep breaths to calm yourself down.

### **sensory item.**

Something that helps manage one or more of your senses to help you calm down and focus your attention. Examples include fidgets and massage balls.

### **social skills.**

Skills needed to communicate and interact with people; skills can be verbal (talking) and nonverbal (gestures, body language and appearance).

### **social skills group.**

A group that meets to practice social skills.

### **some support.**

See levels of support. Support not needed for most daily activities.

### **support levels.**

See levels of support.

### **supports.**

Tools or services that help people with autism in their daily lives. Examples of supports include activities that get you involved in the community, communication devices, job coaching, mentors, social skills groups and summer camp programs.



### **teamwork.**

Working with other people to complete a task or achieve a goal.

### **time management.**

Planning and controlling the amount of time you spend on daily activities.

### **token system.**

A program to help you achieve goals. You get a physical token (something you can hold in your hand) when you complete a task. You collect them and trade them later for a reward. Tokens can be things like poker chips, marbles or coins.

### **trade school.**

See vocational education.

### **tutor.**

A teacher who gives you private lessons one-on-one or in a small group.



### **visual prompt.**

Also called a visual cue. A picture, video or written instructions that help you learn or know to do a task or follow directions.

### **vocational education.**

Also called a vocational-technical school or trade school. Prepares you to work in a specific trade, craft or job function. Examples include auto services, construction, retail sales, floral design and computer network management.

### **vocational rehabilitation (VR).**

A program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs.

### **vocational specialist.**

A trained professional who helps people with disabilities set goals and understand their skills for getting and keeping a job.

# Resources



## For Ages 10-14

- [From Autism Speaks about executive functioning](#)
- [From Parent Toolkit on the teenage brain and executive functioning](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about visual supports and autism](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Guide to IEPs](#)
- [From Understood about IEPs](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about teaching your child self-advocacy](#)
- [From Psychology Today about being a self-advocate](#)

## For Ages 14-16

- [From Autism Speaks about the general transition to adulthood](#)
- [From The Center for Autism Research about options after high school](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about the transition process](#)
- [From The Center for Autism Research on comparing employment and college](#)
- [From Understood about IEP transition planning](#)
- [From ACT about testing accommodations for people with disabilities](#)
- [From College Board about testing accommodations for people with disabilities](#)
- [From The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia about postsecondary admissions assessments](#)

## For Ages 16-18

- [From Autism Speaks about postsecondary education](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Resource Guide about postsecondary education](#)
- [From Education USA about community college](#)
- [From the Gap Year Association about gap year programs](#)
- [From NPR about autistic students attending college](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor on apprenticeships](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about choosing the best postsecondary program](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about how to easily apply for financial aid](#)
- [From College Scholarships about autism-related scholarships](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about FAFSA](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about financial aid for people with disabilities](#)
- [From Federal Student Aid about types of funding for school](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Postsecondary Educational Opportunities Guide](#)

## For Ages 18-22

- [From Autism Speaks on life skills and autism](#)
- [From the Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on emotional regulation](#)
- [From Autism Awareness Centre, Inc. on life skills for kids with autism](#)
- [From the Autism Support Network on teaching organizational skills](#)
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