

Sample letter of introduction to an Instructor in a College Setting

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NOTE: Adapt as student feels fit. Some students prefer just to say they have a disability, without going into specifics, or will point out that it is an “invisible disability” that they want to make sure the instructor understands. Others will be very specific because they do tend to “stick out” and want the instructor to understand what the situation is. Tailor the letter to individual student needs, but remember that no one is required to disclose a disability under the law unless failure to do so would create a meaningful hazard or danger to another party.

Date:

Instructor Name

Campus address (or email address)

Dear Professor [insert instructor name],

My name is [Insert your first and last name], and I am enrolled in your class [Insert Class number and title here] for the [Insert semester/quarter name and year]. I am writing you to introduce myself, and to explain some of my needs as a student with a disability. I really want to do well in your class, but may require some accommodations in order to be successful. I currently participate in the Disabled Students Program (DSS), and am working with [insert DSS counselor name and telephone number or email here]. My counselor has encouraged me to contact you early in the semester so that I can start off in the best possible way.

I have a disability called [insert disability name here]. This disability has nothing to do with how smart I am, and I have worked hard to get to college, and I am very capable of understanding and doing the work, but I do need a few accommodations. [Optional, but for students with HFA, Asperger’s Syndrome or Tourettes Syndrome, may be a good idea] : I also sometimes have behaviors that may seem odd, and want to explain these to

you. My disability makes social interaction challenging at times, and makes dealing with a great deal of noise and other sensory overload very difficult. For this reason, I may not always participate in the same way as other students in the class [provide specific examples here] and would appreciate your understanding in [list what might be helpful here—i.e., for a quiet non-participator, maybe not making too much of the grade based on class discussions because the disability makes these very hard, or for students who are very verbal or single minded in class, focusing on one area of expertise too much, and ask too many questions, dominate class discussions, or for a student with dysgraphia, asking that class notes not be graded for a class where the syllabus says they will have a certain percentage weight, and offering to have other assignments make up the difference.].

Another issue is that I sometimes use behaviors that can make others think I am odd or different, or bother them, but I cannot help these. [Give specific examples of classroom behaviors that have created problems or comments from others in the past—i.e., rocking, flapping, hair twirling, needing to pace in the back of the room, etc.] What has worked well for me in the past has been to have an arrangement with my instructors where [Give examples of what helps you—i.e., instructor signals me discretely if I've been taking up too much time, or limits me to a certain number of questions per class, or allows me to sit near the door and come in and out quietly if I need a break, etc.].

Other accommodations I will need to be able to fully demonstrate my mastery of class material are: [insert a list here, such as]:

- Computer use during class for notes
- Notetaker
- Exams taken through DSS with extra time
- Exams taken on a computer
- Extra breaks during class projects
- Ability to work independently, as group work is very difficult
- Tutoring or extra office hour time from instructor before exams
- Ability to email questions to you after class if I cannot ask them in the group

- [Any other accommodation that would assist you to show what you know/demonstrate your learning]
- Also include any physical or technology related needs that would streamline your arrival to or participation in class—wheelchair space, access to an outlet, etc.

Please let me know as soon as possible whether there is any problem with the accommodations I need, and what I need to do in order to use them. For example, if there are special forms to fill out, I would really appreciate going over them with you or having you email them to me with instructions.

Again, I am very excited to be in your class, and will work very hard to participate as fully and effectively as possible. I appreciate your understanding and support of my disability status, and look forward to learning a great deal from you this semester!

Sincerely,

[Sign your full name]

[Insert your full name]

[provide your email and phone number]

Cc: [Insert DSPS Counselor's name here, along with names of DOR contacts, DDS/Regional center case manager, Center for Independent Living or other agency or person on your support team]