

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Limitations and Reasonable Accommodations

Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) have limitations with general mental abilities that affect intellectual and adaptive functioning and have an IQ under 70-75. ID can be caused by a genetic syndrome, head trauma, exposure to toxins such as lead or mercury, or developed following an illness such as meningitis, whooping cough, or measles. Developmental disabilities (DD) encompass a broader range of conditions, including autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, developmental delay, fetal alcohol syndrome, and other disorders that occur during the developmental period (birth to age 18). Individuals with ID/DD may experience physical, behavioral, learning, language, and/or speech impairments. ID/DD are lifelong conditions that impact day-to-day functioning. Limitations typically impact executive functioning such as planning, organizing, and strategizing; attention to and remembering details; starting and stopping actions; forming concepts and thinking abstractly; and controlling, monitoring, and regulating behaviors. Employees with ID/DD may require only one reasonable accommodation, others may need more than one accommodation to perform the essential functions of their position. A job coach and/or mentor is a commonly utilized accommodation for employees with ID/DD. A job coach can support successful employment by teaching and reinforcing soft skills, time management, organization, work tasks and other skills associated with essential job functions. For more information about intellectual and developmental disabilities and reasonable accommodations, visit the [Job Accommodation Network](#). The following table provides common accommodations utilized to meet the various limitations associated with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Limitations	Accommodations
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clear, simplified language/expectations - speak slower (not louder) - allow extra time to respond/share thoughts
Time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - divide assignments into small tasks - timer to budget time - extra time to complete tasks - assignment checklists - transition times between activities - electronic organizer - wall calendar to emphasize due dates - color-coded system to indicate task, event, or level of importance - peer or supervisor review of calendar entries
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - written instructions, flow charts, and checklists - recording device - additional training time for new tasks - training refreshers - minutes of meetings and trainings - verbal or pictorial cues - color-coding system, notebooks, planners, or sticky notes as reminders of important dates/tasks - labels to assist in item location
Concentration	<p>Auditory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - noise canceling headset - white noise machine - sound absorption panels - relocate/redesign workspace to minimize from audible distractions <p>Visual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduce clutter in work environment - redesign office space to minimize visual distractions

Mental fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - breaks for short walks, water, and/or between tasks - rotating through varied tasks - schedule challenging tasks when stamina is optimal
Prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assign tasks by priority - assign new project once previous project is complete - calendar to identify daily work tasks - electronic organizers, mobile devices, and/or e-mail reminders - color-coded system/“cheat sheets” to prioritize tasks
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regularly organize/clean/reduce clutter in workspace - provide separate work areas/tools for differing tasks - organize and set-up for next day
Multi-tasking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete tasks one at a time - identify tasks that must be performed simultaneously - flow-charts/color-coding/labeling/training on multi-tasking techniques - eliminate distractions - set up workstation to facilitate multi-tasking
Completing paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - automate paperwork - speech recognition software - pre-filled forms/pre-printed stickers - templates/checklists/color-coding/re-design forms for simplicity - large font/double or triple space - adequate space for hand-written responses
Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimize personal conversations in work areas to mitigate distractions - sensitivity/disability awareness training for all employees

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote the modeling of appropriate social skills - adjust supervisory/communication/feedback methods - prompts/guidance to clarify expectations for meetings/social settings - telework
Attendance/tardiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - alarms and timers - sticky notes/reminders in visible areas - turn off/eliminate distractions (cell phone) - daily checklist for work readiness - organize/prepare for work the night before (keys, phone, glasses)
Hyperactivity/impulsive behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quiet workspace - noise cancelling headphones - sit/stand desk - written schedule of commitments and tasks - modified break schedule - seating close to supervisor/away from high-traffic areas - telework