

Tourette Talk:

Navigating School Accommodations and 504 Plans for Children with Tourette's and Other Tic Disorders

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Who Am I?

- Masters degrees in Early Childhood, Special Education, and Bilingual Education from Columbia University
- Doctorate in Psychology from Rutgers University
- School psychologist and former special education teacher
- Worked at the Tourette's Syndrome Clinic at Rutgers University from 2021 to 2023
- Certified CBIT provider



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How do we help Jake?

Jake is a lively 7-year-old first-grader, known for his vivid storytelling and his ability to make any topic interesting. Jake has some vocal tics, such as throat clearing and humming, especially evident during quiet reading times. He also sometimes displays his motor tics - head jerking and eye blinking, especially during recess when he feels nervous about socializing.

The attention from his tics, combined with occasional teasing, has made him somewhat withdrawn in group settings. Jake's parents have observed that while he's enthusiastic about school, he struggles with concentration during longer t



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School Accommodations

IEP

- Is based on a special education law
- Needs to demonstrate "educational impact"
- Provides both accommodations & modifications
- Student can be educated in a special education setting

504 Plan

- Is based on a civil rights law
- No need to demonstrate "educational impact"
- Provides only accommodations
- Available in college and work

IEP vs 504



<https://adayinourshoes.com/difference-504-iep/>

Key points to consider

Tics: Vocal (throat clearing and humming), motor (head jerking and eye blinking).

Visibility of Tics: Draws attention during quiet reading times.

Triggers: quiet time in class & social situations

Social: Teasing from peers; a bit withdrawn.

Academic: Struggles with concentration.

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Accommodation 1:

Inform the student's teachers and students about their TS diagnosis and the uncontrollable nature of the condition.



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Now Available in a Virtual Presentation

Faculty In-Service Program

Creating a Positive, Inclusive, Successful Environment for Students with Tourette Syndrome

NJCTS provides Faculty In-Service Programs designed for education professionals to increase their understanding of Tourette Syndrome (TS) and associated tic disorders. The program includes a presentation by a TS expert and a Q&A session. Request for program details, including Q&A and Q&A presentation slides, is available at www.njcts.org.


NJCTS Faculty In-Service Program:

- 60-90 minutes
- Open to all faculty, including medical professionals, and faculty at all levels
- Topics for professional development include:
 - Overview of TS and related conditions
 - Impact of TS on the classroom
 - Strategies for supporting students with TS in the classroom


Learning Objectives:

- Understand the characteristics, symptoms, and diagnosis of TS and related conditions
- Identify the impact of TS on the classroom
- Understand the importance of creating a positive, inclusive environment for students with TS
- Understand the importance of supporting students with TS in the classroom
- Understand the importance of supporting students with TS in the classroom

To request an in-service for your school, contact us at info@njcts.org or [800-368-6378](tel:800-368-6378).

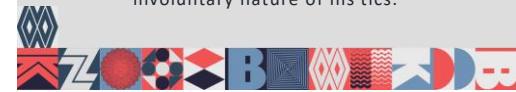


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Accommodation 2:

Teach Jake communication strategies to self-advocate during social interactions, emphasizing the involuntary nature of his tics.



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1. Come up with some scripts
2. Role play with the child
3. Modify based on the situation



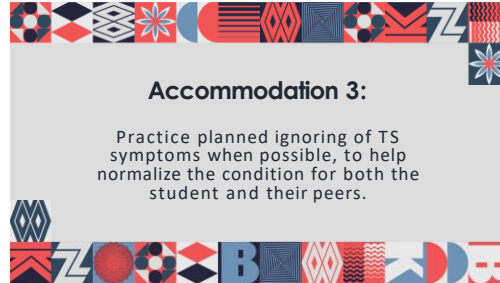
Why do I act this way?
Because I can't control it.

I have Tourette Syndrome or a Tic Disorder - a medical condition. It causes me to cough, sniffle, or clear my throat even though I am not sick. Please understand that this is a medical condition and I cannot control my tics. Treatment for Tourette and tics is limited and there is no cure. I am grateful for your understanding and empathy.

My condition is covered by the American Disabilities Act.
Visit Tourette.org to learn more.



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Accommodation 3:

Practice planned ignoring of TS symptoms when possible, to help normalize the condition for both the student and their peers.


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Planned ignoring include:


- Do not tell the student to stop
- Do not comfort the student when they tic
- Do not laugh at the student
- Do not look at the student
- Simple ignore them

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One exception for planned ignoring:


- When the child is receiving CBIT treatment and practicing completing response, adults may remind them to use their CR when they tic.



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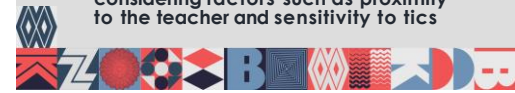


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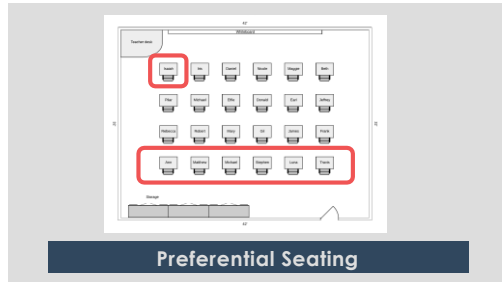


Accommodation 4:

Determine preferential seating to minimize distractions and accommodate the student's needs, considering factors such as proximity to the teacher and sensitivity to tics



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At 9 years of age, Lily is a third-grader with a keen interest in science experiments. However, writing assignments present a significant challenge for her. Each time Lily is faced with a writing task, her motor tics — primarily hand-flinching and sudden shoulder jerks. Due to the noticeable increase in tics during writing activities, Lily often finds herself being directed to leave the classroom, typically heading to the counselor's office or the nurse. Beyond the classroom interruptions, the crux of Lily's challenge lies in her inability to complete written assignments. Regardless of her understanding of the material or her enthusiasm for a topic, writing becomes a big barrier to her learning journey.



How do we help Lily?



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Accommodation 5:

Do not encourage the student to leave the room for mild tics. If tics become distracting, designate a predetermined “safe” space for the student. The student should always bring their work and complete all assigned tasks.



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Addressing Writing Difficulties

Alternative Assignment Formats:
Allow for oral presentations or visual projects in place of written assignments when feasible.

Use of Technology:
Allow student to type instead of handwriting.
Use speech-to-text software to help students articulate ideas without manual writing.

Graphic Organizers:
Use graphic organizers to help the student structure thoughts and ideas before writing.

Handwriting Alternatives:
Do not penalize for poor handwriting.



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Accommodation 8:

Social-emotional support: Provide access to counseling or social-emotional learning programs to help the student cope with anxiety or stress related to their condition.



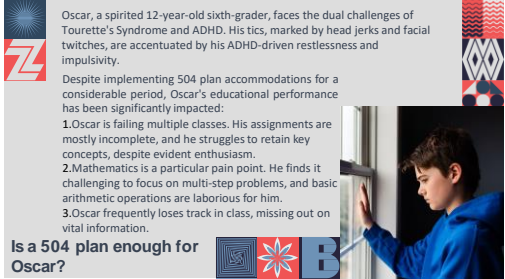
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Oscar, a spirited 12-year-old sixth-grader, faces the dual challenges of Tourette's Syndrome and ADHD. His tics, marked by head jerks and facial twitches, are accentuated by his ADHD-driven restlessness and impulsivity.

Despite implementing 504 plan accommodations for a considerable period, Oscar's educational performance has been significantly impacted:

1. Oscar is failing multiple classes. His assignments are mostly incomplete, and he struggles to retain key concepts, despite evident enthusiasm.
2. Mathematics is a particular pain point. He finds it challenging to focus on multi-step problems, and basic arithmetic operations are laborious for him.
3. Oscar frequently loses track in class, missing out on vital information.

Is a 504 plan enough for Oscar?

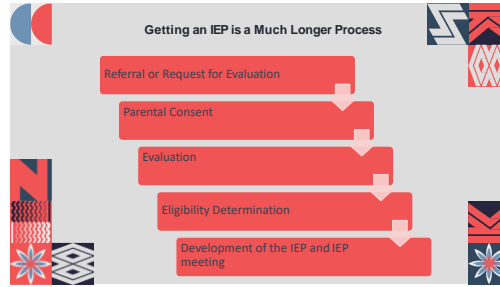


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Amelia's Testing Struggles

Amelia, a 14-year-old ninth-grader, has both motor and vocal tics. Her motor tics involve sudden jerking movements of her arms and occasionally abrupt head movements, coupled with a vocal tic of repeating sounds, often disrupt her flow of thought. During tests, Amelia finds herself under additional stress, exacerbating the frequency and intensity of her tics. This not only disrupts her concentration but also distracts classmates. The sudden jerks mean that Amelia's handwriting is inconsistent. Some words may appear clear, while others are almost illegible due to sudden movements while writing. At times, she might inadvertently draw lines across the page. Multiple-choice questions become a minefield for Amelia. Her involuntary arm jerks can cause her to mark unintended answers or create smudges on the answer sheet, leading to confusion when shading the answer bubbles.

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Testing Accommodations for Amelia

- Extended Testing Time
- Testing in a Separate Location
- Scribe and/or bubbler
- Frequent Short Breaks
- Alternative Response Modes
- Flexible Testing Schedule

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How to Contact Me



hui@3ecenter.org

- CBIT
- IEP/504 Parent Coaching
- Psychoeducational Evaluation

<https://www.theprepprogram.org>

- Executive Functioning Coaching
- Homework Completion



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