

What is an IEP?

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IEP stands for Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a written document that describes the educational plan for a student with a disability. Among other things, your IEP talks about your disability, what skills you need to learn, what you'll do in school this year, what services your school will provide, and where your learning will take place.

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Why Do Students With Disabilities Need an IEP?

First, it's the law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each student with disabilities who receives special education services to have an IEP—an educational program written just for him or her.

Second, the IEP helps the school meet your special needs. It also helps you plan educational goals for yourself. That is why it is called an IEP—because it is an *individualized* education program.

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What is the Purpose of an IEP?

The purpose of the IEP is to make sure that everyone—you, your family, and school staff—knows what your educational program will be this year.

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Where is the IEP Developed?

The IEP is developed during an IEP meeting. The people who are concerned with your education meet, discuss, and develop your IEP goals for the next year.

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Who Comes to the IEP Meeting?

Certain individuals will help write your IEP. We've listed these below. Some are required by law to come to the meeting. (In the list below, we've written these people in **bold letters**.) Others, such as you and your parents, must be *invited* to take part in the meeting. It's your choice to attend or not. (We've listed these people without any bolding of the letters.) All of the people listed below work together as a team to write your IEP. So—who might you see at the meeting?

- You
- Your parents
- At least one of your **regular education teachers**, if you are (or may be) taking part in the regular education environment

(Following taken from "A Student's Guide to the IEP")

- At least one of your **special education teachers** (or **special education providers**)
- **Someone who can talk about your evaluation results** and what they mean, especially what kind of instruction you need
- **Someone from the school system** who knows about special education services and educating students with disabilities and who can talk about what resources the school system has—this person may be your principal, a school counselor, or someone else from the school system
- People from transition service agencies (such as vocational rehabilitation), if you're going to be talking about what you plan to do after leaving high school and what you need to do now to get ready
- Other people who know you—your strengths and needs—very well and who can help you plan your educational program

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How Often is the IEP Meeting Held?

The law requires that your IEP is reviewed and, if necessary, revised at least once a year. This means attending at least one IEP meeting each year. However, you, your parents, or the school can ask for more IEP meetings, if any of you think that it's necessary to take another look at your IEP.

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How Long Does an IEP Meeting Last?

Approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour.

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Why Should I Participate in the IEP Meeting?

It's *your* educational program everyone will be discussing in the meeting. Your opinions are an important part of this discussion.

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What Should I Do if I Want to Help Develop my IEP?

There are five basic steps:

1. Talk to your parents and teachers.
2. Review last year's IEP.
3. Think about your strengths and needs in school.
4. Write your goals for this school year.
5. Practice what you want to say at the meeting.

More details on these steps are given in this booklet. Keep reading!