

Notetaking Accommodations

Based on documentation of disability, Disability Services will determine on a case-by-case/course-by-course basis the use of notetakers as an appropriate accommodation. Students who need this accommodation may have difficulty translating spoken information into a written format, maintaining attention needed for the completion of multitask activities, and/or writing quickly and/or legibly. Students must follow these procedures in order to request notetakers:

Beginning of Each Semester

The student must contact Disability Services to request notetaking services as early as possible each semester as well as to review the policies and procedures for requesting services. The student must provide Disability Services with documentation of disability that supports the student's request for notetakers.

The student must provide a list of notetaker requests in writing at the beginning of each semester that notetakers are required. A returning student who knows someone in classes or someone who is willing to take notes should identify that person to Disability Services. If a new or returning student does not know anyone in the class, Disability Services will locate a student enrolled in the course qualified to take notes on a volunteer basis. Disability Services also will determine, under certain circumstances, if paid notetakers should be used in courses where qualified volunteer notetakers are not available. Disability Services will provide the student with carbonless notepaper or access to a copier to make a copy of the notes.

Niagara University: Disability Services **Notetaking Policies and Procedures**

What is a Notetaker Accommodation?

A notetaker accommodation is a reasonable academic accommodation for a student with documented disability who has difficulty:

1. translating spoken information into a written format.
2. difficulty with multitask attention.
3. writing quickly and/or legibly.

The accommodation, when approved by Disability Services, provides a student with a qualified notetaker who is registered in the same class as the student requesting the notetaker and who has at least a 3.0 GPA (verified by Disability Services), or who is referred by the professor of the class. Qualified notetakers are paid a \$75 stipend per course per semester and are classified as temporary student employees of Niagara University. Disability Services provides the notetaker with access to the scanner in the Office of Academic Support to scan their notes or with carbonless notepaper.

Is the use of a Notetaker an effective accommodation for all students and all classes?

The use of a notetaker can be an effective accommodation if the student has the time and skill to successfully integrate the notetaker's notes with his/her own set of notes from lecture and/or notes from reading assignments. It can take a great deal of time and skill extracting the main ideas from a set of highly detailed notes from the notetaker, comparing this information with the student's own notes, and then creating a third set of notes from which to study. The use of a notetaker may not be effective in all classes every semester, especially if the student is inexperienced using another person's notes or the professor doesn't deliver a traditional lecture and not many notes are available.

Consider using the following alternatives for accessing class notes:

- Record lectures and listen to them immediately after class. If possible, jot down the time on the recorder when the instructor says something particularly important so that the student can go directly to this part of the recording later.
- Ask the instructor if he/she can share copies of his/her notes, lecture outlines, web-based information, or overheads.
- Develop notetaking strategies. These often work best if the student has completed the required readings prior to the lecture and is familiar with key concepts and background information. The student may want to develop a format which allows him/her to combine the notes taken directly from the reading and the notes received from the lecture.
- Devise a shorthand system using abbreviations. Leave blank spaces to fill in material later.
- Write down words the way that they sound and then look up the correct spelling later.
- Sit in the front row to avoid distractions.
- If appropriate, explore the use of medications.

Student Responsibilities:

Making the Request / Hiring

1. Contact Disability Services to request notetaking services as early as possible each semester by completing the Notetaker Request Form.
2. Provide Disability Services with documentation of disability to determine if the use of notetakers is an appropriate accommodation.
3. Work with Disability Services in order to determine in which classes notetakers are needed. The student is encouraged to attend classes first, typically the first two weeks, in order to best determine which classes will most necessitate the notetaker accommodation.
4. If possible, refer potential candidates for notetakers to Disability Services in order to facilitate the paperwork for hiring. Notetakers must be registered in the same class as the student requesting the notetaker. If a student does not know anyone in the class who is qualified to be a notetaker, Disability Services will locate a qualified student.
5. The search for appropriate notetakers begins with the student's written request. It may take some time before a notetaker is hired. Every effort will be made to ensure that the student receives the backlog of notes from the first day of class.
6. Notify Disability Services if the student drops or withdraws from the class for which they have requested a notetaker. Also, if a student's need for notetaking assistance changes, Disability Services must be notified.

Working with a Notetaker

1. Once notetakers have been assigned, the student will receive an email with the notetaker's name and local contact information. Please contact the notetaker(s) to determine which method of providing notes will be utilized (see below) AND when the notes will be available. The student is responsible for contacting their notetaker to establish this notetaking arrangement.

It is the student's responsibility to work with his/her notetaker to ensure that notes are received in a timely manner.

Class notes can be written in either the notetaker's notebook, on carbonless notepaper supplied by Disability Services, or if the notetaker utilizes their own laptop to take notes, typed in a Word/PDF file.

- a) Notes written in notebooks will need to be scanned in the Office of Academic Support within 24 hours of class, or within a reasonable time frame agreed upon by the student and notetaker. Each day, if notes are scanned before 2:00 pm, the notes will be uploaded to Blackboard the same day. If notes are scanned after 2:00 pm, the notes will be uploaded the following business day. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard on a regular basis to access their notes. Please see the handout *Blackboard Instructions: How to Access Notes or Alternate Format Requests*, for more specific directions.
- b) Notes that are typed by the notetaker should be in PDF or Word file that is accessible to the student receiving notes. The student and notetaker should discuss the format/file type before notes are shared. Typically, if this method is utilized to share notes, the notetaker will email notes directly to the student. The student must check their email regularly, if notes are emailed to the student, from the notetaker.

Working with a Notetaker continued

- c) Notes written on carbonless notepaper can be given to the student receiving the notes immediately after class.
2. If a student receives notes via email, or receives copies of notes on the carbonless notepaper directly after class, notes will not typically be scanned in the Office of Academic Support. Therefore, Disability Services will assume a student is receiving their notes in a timely manner, unless the student notifies Disability Services to the contrary.
3. Please work with the notetaker! Tell him/her if they are doing a good job! If more detailed information is needed, ask for it. Thank the notetaker for the notes periodically. Keep in mind that if the student develops a good relationship with the notetaker, the student will be more comfortable communicating with that person and working out the details of the kind of notes that are needed.
4. Having a notetaker does not relieve the student of the necessity to attend class(es). If the student does not attend class, the notetaker is not obligated to provide the student with materials from the missed class(es). If there is a medically documented reason the student missed class, then notes *may* be distributed. It is recommended that the student discuss the reason for missing class with his/her notetaker. Note that permission may be required to access copies of notes under certain circumstances (e.g., excessive absences).
5. Remain actively involved in the class! At all times, the student should have pen and paper available and attempt taking some notes, even if the student only writes down what he/she thinks are key words, ideas, diagrams, pictures, etc. Notes taken by the student should be compared with the notes received from the notetaker. The notetaker's notes are intended to be supplementary, and not a substitute for the students own notes.
6. Again, it is the student's responsibility to work with his/her notetaker to ensure that notes are received in a timely manner. If the student has concerns about the quality of notes, concerns about the notetaker's class attendance, or if there are continued issues about the timeliness of notes, or any other issues, Disability Services must be notified as soon as possible. The student should see Disability Services for any problems with notetakers which cannot be resolved.

Why is the relationship between the student and the notetaker so important?

The relationship between the student and the notetaker is very important! The notetaker is providing a service for the student and is being paid for this service. It is important that the student works with his/her notetaker to make these notes the best possible notes! The feedback that the student provides to the notetaker will help the notetaker know how to improve the notes they take. If the student feels the notetaker's notes are excellent and no improvements could be made, the student should share this with the notetaker. Let him/her know they are doing a good job. This will help them have pride in their work.

Notetaker Responsibilities:

1. Print the course code or name of class and the date of the class at the top of the first page of notes. Please also add the class date to each page of notes. If possible, number each page of notes, and try not to write in the margins of a notebook.
2. Make notes available to the student approved for the notetaking service within 24 hours of the class meeting, or within a reasonable time frame, agreed upon by the student and notetaker. The notetaker can give the notes written on carbonless notepaper directly to the student after class or can take his/her notes to the Office of Academic Support to be scanned. Disability Services will scan the notes and upload them to Blackboard, for the student to access. If notes are scanned before 2:00 pm, they will be available to the student the same day. If notes are scanned after 2:00 pm, they will be available to the student the following business day.
3. If the notetaker already uses his/her own laptop to take notes, the notetaker may also utilize email to share his/her notes. Notes that are typed by the notetaker should be in PDF or Word file that is accessible to the student receiving notes. The student and notetaker should discuss the format/file type before notes are shared. Typically, if this method is utilized to share notes, the notetaker will email notes directly to the student.
4. If the notetaker drops or withdraws from the class for which they have been hired as a notetaker, Disability Services should be notified as soon as possible.
5. Notify the student before or as soon as an absence is anticipated. This will give the student the opportunity to make alternate arrangements (e.g., recording class, asking another student for assistance).
6. Maintain the confidentiality of the notetaker service. Do not divulge to anyone, except the OAS desk aides making the copies, the name of the student(s) for whom notes are being taken, or any information about that student.
7. Complete any necessary paperwork at the Office of Human Resources in a timely manner. Required paperwork includes:
 - Application
 - I-9: identification is required. Please bring the following types of identification with you to Human Resources so that copies can be made for your HR file: typically a United States Social Security card and driver's license or passport. (Please note—Canadian students must obtain a US Social Security Card, show their passport, and I-20 for the I-9 form.)
 - W-4

NOTE: The \$75 stipend is paid out at the end of semester. Please note that if the proper paperwork is not completed, the stipend cannot be approved for payment.

8. The notetaker is only responsible for taking notes. Notetakers are not expected to act as tutors for the course. If the notetaker has any concerns or questions about the notetaker service, please contact Disability Services.
9. Having a notetaker as an academic accommodation should not be viewed as a substitute for attending class, nor should it be seen as an excuse for missing class. The purpose of the accommodation is to support the academic needs of the student and compensate for their difficulties in taking notes for themselves. The notetaker should notify Disability Services if a student has excessive absences or any other attendance concerns.

Disability Services Contact Information:

Kelly Engert
Coordinator, Disability Services
Phone: 716.286.8541
Email: kadams@niagara.edu

Office of Academic Support Hours:

Monday – Thursday:
9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Friday:
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.