



Self-Advocacy

What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-advocacy is an important life-long skill. It is about learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, learning, asking for help, and even making friends.

Ways to be a Better Self-Advocate

- ✓ Identify what you are good at and what you need help with
- ✓ Make a list of people and programs that help support you
- ✓ Learn about laws or policies that support your needs
- ✓ Learn about your disability and how it affects you
- ✓ Invite people to work with you to help you meet your goals
- ✓ Role play with a friend or teacher to practice your skills
- ✓ Attend meetings about you and ask for meetings to share any concerns you may have
- ✓ Connect with other self-advocates through training opportunities or disability organizations





Rate Your Self-Advocacy Skills

- ✓ Do you have a basic knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 laws and understand how they relate to you? *(Yes or No)*
- ✓ Do you know what natural supports you use in your life and how they help you? *(Yes or No)*
- ✓ Do you communicate your needs/wants and do you ask questions when you need more information? *(Yes or No)*
- ✓ Do you know what is in your education/transition plan and are you involved in making that plan? *(Yes or No)*

If you answered “no” to any of these, what **next steps** do you need to take to grow your self-advocacy skills?


Ways to Communicate Your Strengths, Concerns and Needs


Share information in a way that works for you. You can:

- ✓ Talk verbally in person or over the phone
- ✓ Write in a letter, email, or text
- ✓ Use technology such as speech to text software
- ✓ Use pictures, photos, or videos



You know yourself best! Your opinions are important! You are a self-advocate!

✓  The contents of this factsheet were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H235F200001. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government Project Officer. PEATC is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or legal representation. Any information contained in this training is not intended as legal advice and should not be used as a substitution for legal advice.

 U.S. Office of Special Education Programs