

Documentation Guidelines for Test Takers Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Office of Disability Policy

2025



I. Preface

ETS recognizes the importance of periodic review of documentation guidelines to ensure that they reflect current practice and professional standards, developments in the field and recent guidance from the Department of Justice. This edition (2025) of the ETS Documentation Guidelines for Test Takers Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing incorporates the previous edition (2010) and introduces other changes based upon many years of experience with test takers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

You may refer to <https://www.ets.org/disabilities/test-takers.html> for helpful information on requesting accommodations, registering for a test and scheduling a test date. You can also use the “For Test Takers” page for a list of common accommodations, information on where to find bulletins for the test(s) you plan to take, how to determine if documentation is needed to support requested accommodations, and how to register, pay for and schedule the test(s).

To provide more information for your evaluators or other relevant professionals, please direct them to <https://www.ets.org/disabilities/evaluators.html>.

II. Introduction

ETS is committed to providing reasonable testing accommodations for test takers with documented disabilities as recognized under the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). We review requests for accommodations on a case-by-case basis according to established policies and practices, which ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to ETS tests. This document provides guidance to test takers requesting accommodations who are deaf or hard of hearing. It also provides guidance to evaluators regarding the documentation of deafness and hearing loss, and the linking of accommodation requests to disability-related functional limitations.

III. Documentation details

Who should conduct an evaluation and what identifying information is important?

Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses, offering clinical judgments, and making recommendations for accommodations should be qualified to do so. Professional qualifications should include both (1) appropriate training and expertise in the relevant specialty and (2) appropriate licensure/certification. For most individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, the evaluation should be conducted by an audiologist or speech-language pathologist.

A diagnosis documented by a family member will not be accepted consistent with prevailing professional and ethical standards, even when the family member is otherwise qualified by virtue of training and licensure or certification. The issue of dual relationships, as defined by various codes of professional ethics, should be considered in determining whether a professional is in an appropriate position to provide the necessary documentation.

The name, title, and credentials of the qualified professional writing the report should be included. Information about licensure or certification, including the area of specialization, employment, and the state(s) or province(s) in which the individual practices, should also be clearly stated in the documentation.

All reports should be in English, typed on professional letterhead, dated and signed.

Documentation should also indicate whether the evaluation/examination was conducted in person or via telehealth. Additionally, evaluations and/or treatments conducted via telehealth should indicate the respective locations of the examiner and test taker at the time of the telehealth session.

What documents should I submit?

All test takers are encouraged to submit a copy of their most recent audiogram which includes the date testing occurred AND the date hearing loss was first diagnosed. In addition to an audiogram, a statement including diagnosis and current functional limitations from an audiologist or speech-language pathologist is helpful.

In situations where an audiogram is not available and/or not applicable, a test taker should provide recent and appropriate documentation from an audiologist, speech-language pathologist or other qualified professional. The diagnostic report should provide a clear description of the test taker's hearing-related functional limitations as they apply to the current testing situation and should include the specific diagnosis, original date of diagnosis, an indication of the severity of the functional impact of the disability in a testing setting as well as in other life realms, and a rationale for each of the requested testing accommodations. The nature, severity, and extent of the test taker's condition and the functional limitations as they apply to the current testing situation should be addressed.

In all situations, and as a supplement to medical documentation discussed above, documentation regarding prior history of accommodation approval and/or use often provides valuable information. If a test taker has not used accommodations in the past, it is helpful to explain why accommodations were not needed previously and why they are now being requested.



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