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**Advocacy Tips**

Being a good self-advocate is all about knowing your needs, knowing how to say those needs, and asking for your rights with confidence and respect. This page will give you tips for being a good advocate for yourself, your friends, and your family.

Know yourself and your needs

Think about what is important to you and what you want in life. What do you need to get the things you want? What is stopping you from getting the things you want? Write all of this down and update it when something changes.

Do your homework  
Read about your problems and your rights. Look up information that can help you. For example, if your problem is at work, read your HR manual to learn about the specific rules at work that might need to change. And, [read our fact sheets about your legal rights at work](https://www.equipforequality.org/solutions/employment-rights/).

Read about the ADA  
The [ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)](https://www.ada.gov/) is a set of rules that places have to follow to make sure nobody is treated differently just because they have a disability. The ADA covers a lot of different places, businesses, jobs, organizations, and situations. There are many rules that protect you. It is important that you read about them.

Communicate clearly

Use “I” statements when talking or writing, like “I need…” or “I want…” Be very specific and direct.

**Write everything down**It is always best to communicate in writing when you can. For example, if you are asking for a reasonable accommodation at work, email HR your request so there is a record. If you want a change in your student’s IEP, email the IEP team ahead of your next meeting.

You should also write down notes any time something happens. If you have a phone call, write notes about what you talked about.

Keep records

Find a safe place to keep EVERYTHING. Letters, notes, records, and all other documents related to your advocacy should be kept in one place with the newest documents on top.

Believe in yourself

You can do this! Stay positive–even when things are hard. Trust that you can do what needs to be done in order to solve your problem.

Ask for help

It is okay to ask for help when you need it. Places like Equip for Equality have lawyers who know the laws that protect people with disabilities and know how to ask judges to make sure people follow those laws. Sometimes, when self-advocacy is not enough, a lawyer at Equip for Equality can help you.

Asking family and close friends for help is also a good idea. They can help support you in lots of ways. But they might not know you need help until you ask them.

Have More Questions?

Call Equip for Equality.

1-800-537-2632

contactus@equipforequality.org

<http://www.equipforequality.org>

Equip for Equality

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