

What is a memory aid accommodation?

A memory aid is a testing accommodation that is used to support students who have disability-related challenges with memory. A memory aid is a tool used to trigger information that a student has studied but may have difficulty recalling due to processing deficits. They are cues to a larger body of information and would not be useful to a student unless they know and understand how to use the information the memory aid contains. **If the student does not know the course material, the memory aid would not be beneficial.**

Commonly a notecard or sheet of paper, a memory aid gives students an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of course material on a quiz/exam without taxing already compromised memory function. **This accommodation is not intended to reduce academic requirements or alter the standards by which academic performance is assessed.**

Memory aids may contain cues such as: acronyms, short phrases, pictures, schematic diagrams, formulas, names, definitions, tables, or key terms. A memory aid is not meant to record all the facts, concepts, or processes being tested.

While the use of a memory aid is an accommodation, the contents of a memory aid are at the instructor's discretion and should not run contrary to the essential requirements of the course. The instructor or department can determine whether the contents of a memory aid compromise the integrity of the course. If remembering the information on the memory aid is deemed to be an essential learning objective or outcome of the course, it should not be allowed.

For example, if the learning objective or outcome of the course is to *know* a formula, it should not be allowed on the memory aid; however, if the learning objective or outcome of the course is to demonstrate the *ability to apply* the formula, then it *could* be allowed on the memory aid. While the memory aid may be created at any point, the memory aid must be approved by the instructor before the student takes a given exam.

What does a memory aid look like?

The instructor designates what would be a reasonable type and size of memory aid. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A 3"x5" notecard with acronyms or mnemonics
- An 8.5"x11" sheet of paper with common terminology written on one side only
- An approved PDF of diagrams used during an online exam

What is NOT considered a memory aid?

As it is only meant to trigger recall and processing of knowledge the student should already know, the memory aid should not be a comprehensive record of all information needed to pass the test. The following are examples of what would NOT be considered a memory aid:

- Copies of pages from the textbook
- Notes from class, lectures, slides, etc.
- Practice problems or previous homework

Approving Memory Aids

As with all approved accommodations, students with preapproved memory aids on their accommodation plan must first submit their accommodation notice for the class to alert the instructor of their plan. The instructor must approve the content of the memory aid before the student may use it for a test.

For students taking tests in-class or who have an alternative arrangement to take a test with the instructor, the instructor approves and allows the student to use it as appropriate.

For students taking alternative tests in Accessibility Resources, there must be confirmation from the instructor of the content of a memory aid. The process to confirm is as follows:

1. The student submits their proposed memory aid to the instructor **at least 3 school days** in advance of the scheduled testing appointment.
2. The instructor submits the approved aid to Accessibility Resources via:
 - a. Scanning and emailing it to ar@mnsu.edu, and AR will print it with the exam for the student.
 - b. Scanning or taking a picture of the memory aid and emailing AR to confirm its contents.
 - c. Bringing the physical memory aid to the AR office in Memorial Library 132.

Note: Sending via campus mail is discouraged.

This process prevents a student from changing a memory aid before the test. The instructor, at their discretion, may choose a less secure method of approval (signing or initialing it, sending an email saying it's okay, sending via campus mail, etc.). Unless the instructor designates otherwise, the memory aid will be turned in with the test.

Instructor Considerations

When reviewing the contents of a memory aid, it is paramount that they take into consideration the learning objectives for the course and for the given test. For example, is it required for a student to utilize rote memory to know a concept on demand? Or is it the requirement for the student to demonstrate that they know how to apply a given concept? The memory aid accommodation provides equal access to a student with disability-related challenges that impact their memory in order to meet the stated objectives. With those considerations, it is at the instructor's discretion to determine what content to approve on the memory aid, whether to provide feedback, or provide explicit instructions of what would be allowed.

For concerns or questions...

If you believe the use of a memory aid during tests would be a fundamental alteration to the objectives of the course, or you have questions about it in general, please contact Accessibility Resources. We would be happy to discuss with you how to best meet the student's accommodation needs while also preserving the rigor of the course.

Main Office:
Accessibility Resources
ar@mnsu.edu
507-389-2825

Alternative Testing Coordinator:
Alex J. Lucier, Asst. Dir. for Accommodations & Student Success
alex.lucier.2@mnsu.edu
507-389-5242