

Tips to #AccessLanguages

Studying a language could be just what you need to take your international exchange to the next level. These tips will help you gain access to languages no matter what your disability, and no matter what the language.

Research Language Nuances

Understand what is involved with your language of interest.

Does it use the Roman alphabet or another alphabet? Are there words that are pronounced differently from their spellings?

Brainstorm modifications for you to master those differences. Speaking with a trusted supporter such as an advisor from the office of students with disabilities, a supportive teacher, or a mentor with your disability could help you come up with ideas.

Plan for Reasonable Accommodations

Request reasonable accommodations or modifications with the language teacher.

Ideas might include:

A digitalized or braille version of the textbook and the use of a draftsman's board to make tactile depictions of calligraphy symbols.

A sign language interpreter who can understand both spoken languages thus can fingerspell the way that words are spoken and written.

A revised rubric for the final grade to focus on student strengths while reducing emphasis from areas that a student might not be able to do.



Practice and Problem-Solve

Actively seek out opportunities to use your language and be prepared for unexpected challenges.

Read newspapers, books, watching films, or talking with native speakers such as international students, immigrants or members of your international community or with student alumni of international exchange programs.

This will not only help you take your language skills to the next level, it may also be imperative if you find that you don't get the necessary support in the traditional classroom.

Travel with a Purpose

Consider doing an international exchange that allows you to practice using your new language.

Refer to online resources, such as miusa.org/plan, to plan, prepare, decide on and request reasonable accommodations for an international program.

Immerse yourself in another setting, stay with a local host family, and better understand the culture to make sense of the language you are learning.

