

# How to speak up for yourself

## Information for students

An Easy Read guide



## How to use this guide



A group of people worked together to write this guide.

The group included:



- people with disability



- their families and carers



- Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)



- the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA).



They wrote this guide for the Australian Government Department of Education (DoE).



When you see the word 'we', it means the people who wrote this guide.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

**Bold**  
Not bold

We have written some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of important words we use in this guide on page **6**.

There is a list of other words we use on page **32**.



This Easy Read guide is a summary of another guide.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.

You can find the other guide on our website.



[www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/information-resources-students-disability-and-their-caregivers](http://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/information-resources-students-disability-and-their-caregivers)



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

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## Words we use in this guide



We have some words we always use in this guide.

Knowing what these words mean can help you understand this guide better.

### Disability



A disability can affect your:

- brain
- body
- **senses.**



You use your senses to understand the world around you.



When you have a disability, part of your body doesn't work:

- very well
- how it should.



A disability can affect:

- what you can do
- how much you can do on your own.

A disability can affect how you:



- communicate

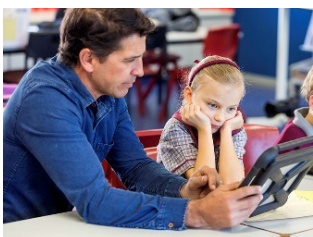


- learn



- do things.

## Education



When you get an education, teachers support you to learn:

- new skills
- knowledge.



## Educational institution

An educational institution is somewhere you go to learn.

This could be a:



- pre-school or kindergarten



- primary school



- high school



- university



- training organisation, such as TAFE.





An educational institution might be public – this means it's run by the government.



Or it could be private – this means another organisation owns and runs it.



### **Reasonable adjustment**

When something changes so you can join in, we call it an adjustment.

This is sometimes called an accommodation.



Adjustments can include:



- someone to support you
- doing things in new ways
- changing things.



When something is reasonable, it is:

- fair
- sensible.



Reasonable adjustments are things your educational institution must:

- do
- change.



## Rights

Your rights are rules for how you can expect other people to treat you.

This includes educational institutions.

## Standards

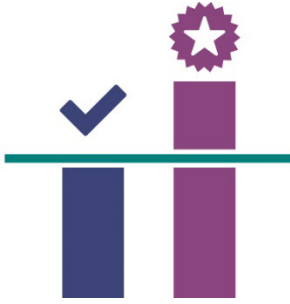
Standards are what we use to measure how well something is done.

We look at:

- what is done
- what the standard is.



Standards help us make sure things work well.



Educational institutions must:

- reach the standard
- try to do better than the standard.



## Students

Students are people who learn with an educational institution.

This includes when they learn:



- in a classroom



- at home



- at work.



Students can be people:

- with disability
- without disability.

## Who this guide is for



This guide is for students with disability at school.

This includes:

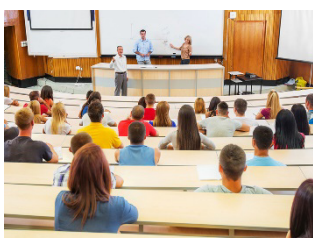


- primary school

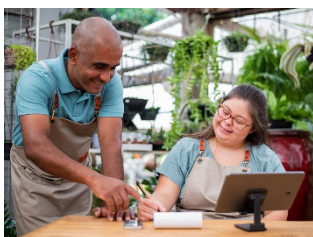


- high school.

This guide is also for students with disability at:



- university



- Vocational education and training (VET).



VET is a type of education.

It includes:

- TAFE
- **apprenticeships.**



An apprenticeship is when someone learns how to do a job while they are at work.

For example, as a builder or hairdresser.

## What this guide is about



This guide is about **self-advocacy** when you go to an educational institution.

Self-advocacy is when you speak up for yourself.

When you speak up for yourself, you:



- stand up for what matters to you
- ask for what you need
- ask for support
- make choices about your own life.



Self-advocacy means you know your rights.



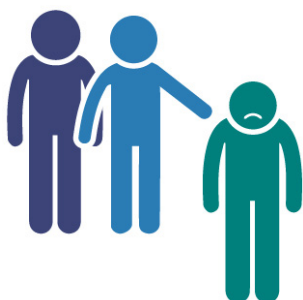
Self-advocacy also means you tell people what you:

- think
- feel.

## Laws that protect you



There are 2 laws that protect you when you go to an educational institution.



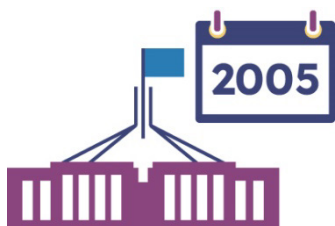
**Discrimination** is when someone is treated unfairly because of something about them they can't change.



In Australia, we have a law called the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*.



The DDA says it is against the law to treat people with disability unfairly.



In 2005, the Australian Government published the *Disability Standards for Education (DSE)*.



The DSE are standards for the education of students with disability.

The DSE talk about 2 important things:



- the rights of students with disability



- what educational institutions must do.



The DSE and the DDA work together to protect students with disability.



## How educational institutions follow these laws



Educational institutions must follow the DSE to support students with disability.



They must also make reasonable adjustments to support students with disability taking part in their education.



But they don't have to make a change if it creates an **unjustifiable hardship** for them.



An unjustifiable hardship is a change that is too much for an educational institution to make for a student.

For example, a change you need them to make might cost too much money.

## Your rights



You have the same rights as students without disability.



You have the right to **enrol** in an educational institution.



When you enrol, you:

- tell an educational institution you want to become a student
- give the educational institution important information about yourself.



You have the right to take part in:

- your course or program
- all learning experiences.



You have the right to learn in a place where you are safe.



You also have the right to use support services.

For example, a school **counsellor**.



A counsellor is a person who works with you to:

- understand how you think and feel
- find ways to help you feel better.

## Speaking up for yourself



When you speak up for yourself, you are trying to get other people to understand what you:

- think
- feel.



Speaking up for yourself is about taking part in conversations that will affect you and your life.

This includes conversations with your educational institution.



For example, if your educational institution doesn't follow the DSE, you can talk to them about it.

This is speaking up for yourself.



When you talk to your educational institution, it's important to:

- tell them what you need and want
- take care of yourself.

## How to give feedback



You can talk to your educational institution if you have **feedback**.

When you give feedback, you tell an educational institution what they can do better to help students.



It's okay to give feedback.

You won't be in trouble.



Your feedback can be a **compliment**.

When you give a compliment, you tell an educational institution what they are doing well.



Your feedback can be a **suggestion**.

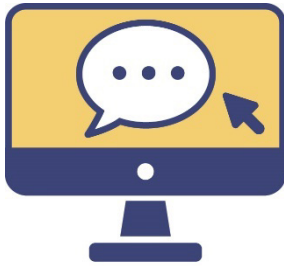
When you make a suggestion, you tell an educational institution what they can do better.



Your feedback can be a **complaint**.

When you make a complaint, you tell an educational institution that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.



Before you talk to your educational institution about your feedback, you can visit their website to find out:

- how they manage feedback
- who to talk to.



There are 3 steps you can take to give your educational institution feedback.

We explain how to take each step on the following pages.

## Step 1



You can talk to your educational institution.

For example, you might send your teacher an email.

Or you might ask to talk to them after your lesson.



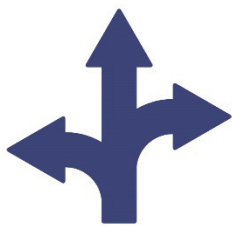
You might need to have a meeting to talk about your feedback in more detail.

For example, if your feedback is a complaint.

You also might need to:



- talk to them more than once before they solve the issue



- try different things to find out what works



- talk to a senior person at your educational institution

## Step 2



If you need to make a complaint, you might need to tell the person or organisation who runs your educational institution.



This step is different for each type of educational institution you go to.



But all educational institutions must follow the DSE.



Your educational institution can give you information about how to make a complaint to the person or organisation who runs it.



## Step 3

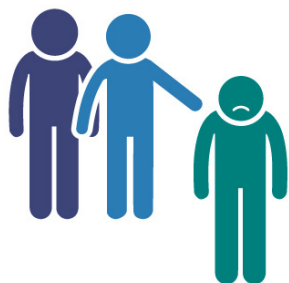


If you need to make a complaint, you might need to tell a person or organisation outside of your educational institution.

You might do this if you couldn't solve the issue by talking to:



- your teacher
- a senior person at your educational institution
- the person or organisation who runs your educational institution.



You might also do this if you think you have experienced discrimination.

For example, you can make a complaint to the **Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)**.



The AHRC is an organisation that makes sure people treat others:

- fairly
- equally.



You can visit their website to find out how to make a complaint to them.

<https://humanrights.gov.au>



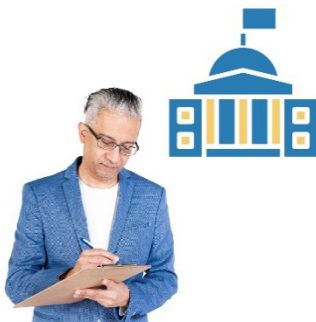
You can call them.

**1300 656 419**



You can also send them an email.

[infoservice@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:infoservice@humanrights.gov.au)



If you go to a public educational institution, you can make a complaint with your state or territory **Ombudsman**.

An Ombudsman helps people with complaints.

They check to see if an educational institution managed a complaint well.



An Ombudsman can't:

- manage your complaint
- change the decision your educational institution made.

# How to get ready for a meeting

## Before the meeting



You need to ask the person you want to talk to for a meeting.

For example, your teacher.



You also need to make a list of things you want to talk about in the meeting.



You can ask someone you trust to come to the meeting with you.

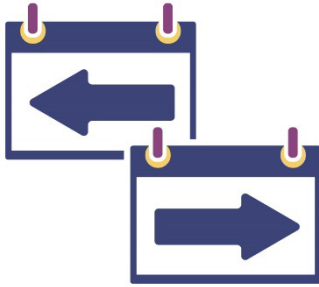
For example, a friend or family member.

## During the meeting



When you are in the meeting, you should tell the person:

- what you need or want
- your feedback.



You should also tell them what has already happened to solve the issue.

And what you want to happen next.



It can help if you take notes during the meeting.



You should also talk to the person about a plan.



This can include:

- what will happen next
- who will do it
- when it will happen.

## After the meeting



It's a good idea to send an email to everyone who went to the meeting.

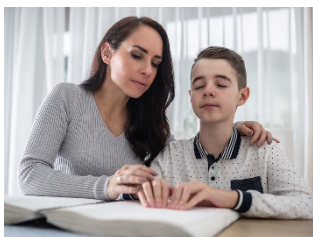


Your email can include information about what happened in the meeting.



It's important to follow up with the person after the meeting to make sure everyone is working towards the steps in the plan.

## Where to find support and information



You don't have to do everything by yourself.

You can ask someone to help you:



- get ready for a meeting
- go with you to a meeting
- fill out forms.

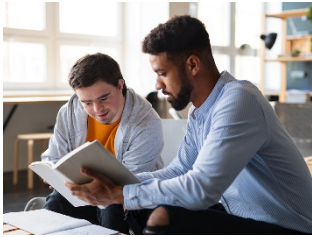
This might be a friend or support person.

If you are under 18 years old, you might need to get help from your:



- parent
- carer
- guardian – a person who makes decisions for a child.

You can ask **advocacy services** to help you.



Advocacy services:

- support you
- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.



You can visit the Disability Gateway website.

[www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/legal/advocacy](http://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/legal/advocacy)



You can visit the Disability Advocacy Network Australia website.

[www.dana.org.au/find-an-advocate](http://www.dana.org.au/find-an-advocate)



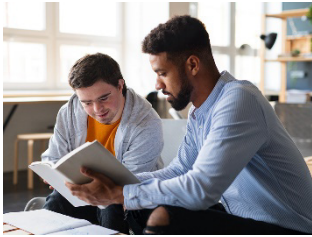
You can also ask your friends to support you.

They might have experienced something similar to you.

## Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this guide mean.

### **Advocacy services**



Advocacy services:

- support you
- help you have your say
- give you information and advice.

### **Apprenticeships**



An apprenticeship is when someone learns how to do a job while they are at work.

For example, as a builder or hairdresser.

### **Complaint**



When you make a complaint, you tell an educational institution that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.





## Compliment

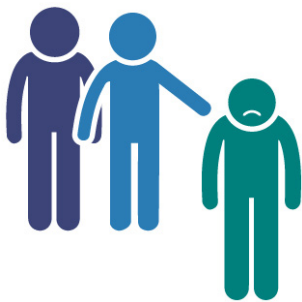
When you give a compliment, you tell an educational institution what they are doing well.



## Counsellor

A counsellor is a person who works with you to:

- understand how you think and feel
- find ways to help you feel better.



## Discrimination

Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of something about them they can't change.



## Enrol

When you enrol your child, you:

- tell an educational institution you want them to become a student
- give the educational institution important information about them.



## **Feedback**

When you give feedback, you tell an educational institution what they can do better to help students.



## **Guardian**

A person who makes decisions for a child.



## **Ombudsman**

An Ombudsman helps people with complaints.

They check to see if an educational institution managed a complaint well.



## **Self-advocacy**

Self-advocacy is when you speak up for yourself.



## Suggestion

When you make a suggestion, you tell an educational institution what they can do better.



## Unjustifiable hardship

An unjustifiable hardship is a change that is too much for an educational institution to make for a student.

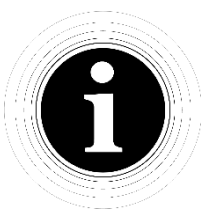
## Vocational education and training (VET)



VET is a type of education.

It includes:

- TAFE
- apprenticeships.



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