Key #2: Provide Instructional Adaptations and Accommodations

These two terms often apply to the same tools and approaches that make a learning task more manageable. The distinction between the terms is a legal one.

- **Accommodations** are adaptations to which a person diagnosed with LD has a legal right. They include a wide range of tools and changes in the way a task is done, including all those listed below under adaptations. For people struggling with an essential life function due to a learning disability, specific accommodations can move them from frustration and failure to achievement and productivity! The possibility of such a change is one of the strongest reasons for getting a diagnostic evaluation.

- **Adaptations** may be identical to accommodating, but when there is no LD diagnosis, there is no legal right to use them (e.g., in a testing situation or on the job). Many of us have stumbled onto some helpful adaptation in life without thinking of it as such: color-coding, reading out loud when we’re trying to digest a complicated article, or taking frequent breaks. Adaptations that involve assistive technology are part of our everyday lives: hearing aids, glasses, computers, magnifying glasses.

Some examples of adaptations (which could be accommodations if legally required) are:

- extended time for completing a task or test or break it into manageable chunks
- writing directly on the test, rather than on an answer sheet
- reading or planning aloud or with a partner
- using mind (semantic) mapping when prewriting or taking notes
- writing on alternate lines when writing a paragraph or essay
- using legal pads turned horizontally when doing arithmetic processes that require figures in straight columns
- using large print with a lot of white space, particularly around math problems
- trying environmental changes: frequent breaks, quieter space, white noise, different lighting
- using organizational aids: day planners, color-coded materials, watches with alarms
- using assistive technology and compensatory devices: books on tape or disc, calculators, alternate forms of tests, hand-held spell checkers, speech synthesizers; talking word processors and text readers, software for speech recognition, outlining, brainstorming, proofreading, or semantic mapping