

FREE PARENT GUIDE

THE IEP ASK LIST



**What You Can Actually Ask For That
the School Won't Always Volunteer**

THE IEP ASK LIST

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THE IEP ASK LIST

Welcome & Overview

Dear Parent,

If you've ever sat in an IEP meeting thinking,

"I know my child needs more support... but I don't even know what I'm allowed to ask for,"

you are not alone.

Most parents are never handed a clear menu of what can actually go into an IEP. They usually hear about the supports the school is used to offering — not every option that may be available.

That is why I created this guide.

~What This Guide Can Help You Do

This guide is NOT a list of demands.

It is a menu of services, accommodations, modifications, evaluations, and supports you can ask the team to consider based on your child's needs.

Use it to walk into your next IEP meeting with clearer language, better questions, and a stronger understanding of what may be possible.

~The Big Reframe

An IEP is not just "extra help."

It can include instruction, services, accommodations, assistive technology, behavior supports, social-emotional supports, staff support, and more — when those supports are needed for your child to access school and make progress.

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You do not need to know every legal term. But you do deserve to know what can be discussed.

Because you cannot ask for support you do not know exists.

~How to Use This Guide

Look for the 2–3 areas where your child is struggling most right now.

Ask yourself:

- ***What keeps coming up again and again?***
- ***What has not improved, even with the current IEP?***

Then bring those areas to the IEP team and ask:

“Can we discuss whether this is something my child needs?”

You are not being difficult by asking specific questions. The school may know the system. But you know your child. And this guide is here to help you bring those two pieces together.

You are not alone in this,

♥ *Nicole*

Important note:

This is not a checklist of demands — it is a menu of possibilities. Use it to ask better questions, request evaluations when something needs more clarity, and connect your child’s struggles to specific supports that may belong in the IEP.

Every child’s IEP should be based on their individual needs, evaluations, and data. This guide is here to help you ask better questions — not to suggest that every support is appropriate for every child.

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The IEP Ask List

01 — If Your Child Struggles with Reading

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Decoding	Structured literacy instruction, phonics-based intervention, specialized reading program
Fluency	Repeated reading, fluency goals, small-group instruction
Comprehension	Explicit comprehension strategy instruction, graphic organizers, chunked text
Access to grade-level content	Audiobooks, text-to-speech, read-aloud accommodations
Testing	Extended time, reduced-distraction setting, oral administration when appropriate

The school might say your child is “below grade level” or “receiving intervention,” but that does not always tell you **what skill is being taught, how it is being taught, or whether your child has access to grade-level content while those skills are developing.**

Schools may not automatically explain:

- The specific reading skill being taught
- The reading methodology being used
- How often the intervention happens
- Whether the person providing the intervention is trained in that method
- Whether your child needs assistive technology to access grade-level material

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Ask it this way:

“Can we clarify which reading skill my child is struggling with — decoding, fluency, comprehension, or access to grade level text — and what specific instruction or support will address it?”

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02 — If Your Child Struggles with Writing

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Spelling	Explicit spelling instruction, word study, assistive technology
Written expression	Sentence frames, graphic organizers, measurable writing goals
Dysgraphia / fine motor	Occupational therapy evaluation, keyboarding instruction, speech-to-text
Output volume	Reduced copying requirements, alternative response formats
Editing / revising	Editing checklists, teacher conferencing, explicit revision instruction

Writing struggles are often minimized as “messy handwriting,” “rushing,” or “not trying.” But writing can involve fine motor skills, spelling, language organization, executive function, working memory, and expressive language.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether your child needs writing-specific measurable goals
- Whether assistive technology could help, such as speech-to-text or word prediction
- Whether handwriting demands should be reduced
- Whether your child needs support with organizing ideas, not just producing more writing
- Whether an occupational therapy evaluation should be considered

Ask it this way:

“Is my child’s writing difficulty caused by handwriting, spelling, organizing ideas, getting thoughts onto paper, or completing the task independently?”

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03 — If Your Child Struggles with Math

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Calculation	Explicit math intervention, fact fluency support with systematic instruction
Problem-solving	Step-by-step strategy instruction, visual models, anchor charts
Working memory	Formula sheets, multiplication charts, chunked problem sets
Math anxiety	Reduced problem sets, preview/review routines, confidence-building supports
Access	Calculator when appropriate, manipulatives, visual supports

Math struggles are not always about “not understanding math.” The root issue could be calculation, reasoning, language, working memory, attention, anxiety, or problem-solving — and each one may require a different type of support.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether the issue is calculation, reasoning, language, memory, anxiety, or attention
- Whether your child needs explicit math instruction or access supports
- Whether working memory supports could help
- Whether word problems are creating a language barrier
- Whether the amount of work should be reduced while the skill is developing

Ask it this way:

“Can we identify whether the math issue is calculation, understanding concepts, solving word problems, remembering steps, or completing work independently?”

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04 — If Your Child Struggles with Behavior

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Meltdowns / shutdowns	Behavior intervention plan, regulation breaks, calm-down plan with agreed-upon signals
Aggression / refusal	Functional behavior assessment, replacement behavior instruction, de-escalation plan
Anxiety	Predictable routines, daily check-ins, counseling as a related service
Transitions	Visual schedules, transition warnings, adult support at key transition points
Trauma / stress response	Reduced escalation practices, designated safe person, sensory supports

Behavior is often addressed with consequences before anyone asks, “*What skill is this child missing?*” or “*What is the child’s behavior communicating?*” If behavior is interfering with learning, the team should be discussing proactive supports, skill-building, and what adults will do differently — not just what the child needs to stop doing.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) should be considered
- Whether behavior patterns have been identified
- What proactive supports can be put in place before the behavior occurs
- Whether staff need training to respond consistently and appropriately
- Whether the IEP should include goals that teach replacement skills, not just track incidents

Ask it this way:

“Can we look at what happens before the behavior, what skills my child may be missing, and whether we need an FBA or behavior plan?”

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05 — If Your Child Struggles With Executive Functioning Skills

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Organization	Binder system, planner checks, explicit organization instruction with practice
Task initiation	Start prompts, first-step support, reduction of overwhelm at assignment launch
Planning	Assignment breakdowns, interim deadlines, project mapping
Time management	Visual timers, extended time, calendar system support
Homework completion	Modified workload when appropriate, home-school communication system

Schools often offer reminders, but reminders are not the same thing as teaching executive functioning skills. A child who cannot start, plan, organize, remember, shift, or complete work may need direct support — not just reminders to “try harder” or “use your planner.”

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether your child needs direct instruction in executive functioning skills
- Whether reminders are being used instead of actual skill-building
- Whether assignments should be broken into smaller steps
- Whether planning, organization, or time management should be written into goals
- Whether a home-school communication system is needed

Ask it this way:

“Are we expecting my child to know how to use executive functioning skills they have not been directly taught yet?”

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06 — If Your Child Struggles Socially

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Peer conflict	Social problem-solving goals, counseling, facilitated peer practice
Pragmatic language	Speech-language services, conversation skills instruction
Lunch / recess difficulty	Supported social opportunities, structured peer activities
Group work	Assigned roles, adult facilitation, clear expectations in group settings
Bullying vulnerability	Safety plan, increased supervision, clear reporting pathway

Social struggles may be dismissed when a child's grades are okay. But IEPs are not limited to academics alone. Social, communication, peer, and emotional safety needs can affect a child's access, participation, independence, and overall school experience.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether social goals should be considered
- Whether pragmatic language support is needed
- Whether counseling or facilitated peer practice could help
- Whether the child needs adult support at lunch, recess, or for group work
- Whether a safety plan or increased supervision is needed

Ask it this way:

“How are my child's social, communication, or peer challenges affecting access, participation, emotional safety, or independence at school?”

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07 — If Your Child Struggles with Communication

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Articulation	Speech therapy services with measurable goals
Language processing	Repetition, visual supports, comprehension checks built into instruction
Expressive language	Sentence starters, alternative response formats, extended response time
Pragmatic language	Social communication goals, real-context practice opportunities
AAC needs	Assistive technology evaluation, communication device or low-tech supports

Communication is not only about articulation. A child may speak clearly but still struggle to understand language, express ideas, follow directions, participate in conversation, or communicate needs throughout the school day.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether AAC should be considered
- Whether an assistive technology evaluation is needed
- Whether language supports are needed outside the speech therapy room
- Whether skills are being practiced in real classroom and social settings
- Whether your child needs support understanding, processing, or using language — not just speaking clearly

Ask it this way:

“Are we only looking at how my child speaks, or are we also looking at how they understand, process, and use language during the school day?”

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08 — If Your Child Struggles with Sensory Needs or Physical Access

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Noise sensitivity	Noise-reducing headphones, quiet workspace option
Movement needs	Scheduled movement breaks, flexible seating
Fatigue / chronic illness	Rest breaks, shortened assignments, medical/health plan, modified attendance plan when needed
Fine motor access	OT services, adapted tools, keyboarding instruction
Visual / auditory access	Preferential seating, captioning, enlarged print, audio supports

Sensory and physical access needs may be treated like preferences unless they are clearly connected to access, regulation, participation, learning, or educational progress.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether sensory supports should be written into the IEP
- Whether movement or rest breaks are needed proactively
- Whether chronic illness or fatigue requires a health plan or modified schedule
- Whether OT services, adapted tools, or keyboarding instruction should be considered
- Whether visual or auditory access supports are needed across school settings

Ask it this way:

“What sensory, health, or access supports does my child need in order to participate, stay regulated, and make progress during the school day?”

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09 — If Your Child Struggles with Independence + Life Skills

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Self-advocacy	Goals for asking for help, using accommodations independently, self-monitoring
Daily routines	Task analysis, visual checklists, independence goals with fading support
Toileting / feeding	Health plan, OT support, nursing involvement where appropriate
Navigating transitions	Adult support, visual maps, schedule preview and practice
Older students (14+)	Transition planning, vocational skills, postsecondary goals as required by IDEA

Independence skills are often overlooked because the IEP conversation often stays focused only on academics. But school success is not just completing assignments — it can also mean asking for help, using accommodations, managing routines, communicating needs, moving through the building safely, and preparing for life beyond school.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether independence goals should be added
- Whether your child needs support using accommodations independently
- Whether daily routines should be broken down and directly taught
- Whether toileting, feeding, or health-related supports should be discussed
- Whether transition planning, vocational skills, or postsecondary goals need to be addressed

Ask it this way:

“What does my child need to become more independent, not just more compliant?”

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10 — BONUS - If Your Child Struggles with Attendance, Medical Needs, or Access Due to Health Issues

Need	Possible IEP Supports to Discuss with the Team
Chronic illness / fatigue	Flexible attendance support, rest breaks, reduced schedule when needed
Extended absence	Homebound or hospital instruction, re-entry plan
Medical documentation	Health plan, nurse check-ins, emergency response plan
Appointments / absences	Excused medical absences, make-up work plan, flexible deadlines
Grades	No grade penalty for documented medically related absences, when appropriate
Recovery support	Modified workload, designated rest space, gradual return plan

Health-related needs are often treated as separate from school support. But if your child's medical condition, fatigue, recovery, appointments, or absences affect their ability to attend, participate, complete work, or make progress, the team should discuss what needs to be written clearly into the plan.

Schools may not automatically explain:

- Whether medically related absences should be addressed in the IEP
- Whether your child needs a health plan, re-entry plan, or reduced schedule
- Whether homebound or hospital instruction should be considered
- How make-up work, grading, and deadlines will be handled after absences
- Whether rest breaks, nurse check-ins, or recovery supports are needed during the school day

Ask it this way:

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“How is my child’s health affecting attendance, participation, work completion, or progress — and what needs to be written into the plan so we are not handling it case by case?”

A stronger ask for parents of kids with chronic illness:

“Can we put a clear plan in writing for absences, make-up work, health needs, and re-entry so my child is supported consistently instead of starting over every time?”

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How to Turn this List Into a Strong IEP Ask

The Question Is Not Just “Can I Ask For This?”

A better question is:

“Can we connect this request to my child’s documented needs?”

The strongest IEP requests usually connect three things:

1. **The need**
What is the child struggling with?
2. **The impact**
How is it affecting their learning, access, participation, behavior, communication, or independence?
3. **The ask**
What support, service, accommodation, modification, or evaluation should the team consider?

Quick Reminder:

Schools often start with common supports like preferential seating, extended time, small group, check-ins, or breaks.

But your child may need something more specific. The goal is to connect the support to your child’s actual need — not just accept the easiest option.

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Before Your Next IEP Meeting, Pick 3

The goal is NOT to ask for everything in this guide.

The goal is to help you notice what may be missing.

Before your next IEP meeting, choose the **2-3 areas** where your child is struggling most right now.

Ask yourself:

1. ***What keeps happening over and over again?***
2. ***What has not improved, even with the current supports?***
3. ***What is my child being expected to do without enough help?***
4. ***What skill does my child need to be taught — not just reminded to do?***
5. ***What support has the school mentioned casually but not written clearly into the IEP?***

Then bring those areas to the team.

You can say:

“Can we talk about what support would address this specific need?”

Here’s a Simple Formula For Making the Ask

When you are not sure how to phrase your request, use this sentence:

“Because my child struggles with _____, and it affects _____, I’d like the team to consider _____.”

Example:

“Because my child struggles with reading decoding, and it affects their ability to access grade-level text, I’d like the team to consider structured literacy instruction and text-to-speech.”

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Want Help Choosing Your Child's Top 3 Asks?

If you are looking at this guide and thinking,

“This is helpful...but I still don't know which ones fit my child,”

that is exactly where I can help.

In an **IEP Strategy Session**, we'll look at your child's current struggles, what is already in place, and what may still be missing.

Together, we'll identify the **2-3 strongest supports, services, evaluations, or questions** to bring to your next IEP meeting.

You do not have to figure this out alone.

[Book your IEP Strategy Session by clicking HERE.](#)

You are not alone in this,

♥ *Nicole*

