

Volunteer Note Taker Guidance

Students who are registered with the Office of Disability Resources (ODR) and approved for the accommodation of a Volunteer Note Taker may require the use of volunteer classmates who are enrolled in the same courses to provide them a copy of their notes. These notes may be typed or handwritten. ODR has carbon copy paper available for pick up or that can be inter-office mailed to the instructional faculty member upon request. Students may choose to have an anonymous arrangement, which should be respected and the identity of the student with accommodations should not be disclosed, unless consent is provided.

Please connect with ODR by emailing odr@umw.edu or calling (540) 654-1266 as early as possible if you have any questions or concerns regarding the implementation of this accommodation, or any ODR accommodation.

For Students:

Students using note takers are expected to assume an active role in acquiring this service. You must share your accommodation letter and discuss the volunteer note taker accommodation with your faculty, should you choose to use this accommodation. Please connect with ODR with any questions or concerns regarding discussing any of your accommodation needs with your faculty.

During the first week of class, you may wish to ask other students in the class if they would be willing to share notes with you. If you choose this option, ODR recommends keeping a record of their name, phone number and email address so that you may connect with them directly for questions as they come up.

If you cannot (or prefer not to) find a note taker yourself, please talk with your instructor as early as possible in the semester (ODR recommends the first week of class or as early as possible after receiving the accommodation). Ask your instructor to make an announcement on your behalf requesting note takers, and an example statement for instructors can be found below. Please be sure to ask the instructor to keep your name confidential if you wish to remain anonymous.

Students using note takers are expected to attend class. Note takers may be asked to discontinue if you do not attend class regularly, unless you have discussed alternatives with your faculty and/or ODR.

It is the student's responsibility to inform ODR if experiencing any problems with the volunteer note taker accommodation process. We will do our best to assist you with any issues related to accommodations.

Please inform ODR and, if possible, the note taker and the instructor, if you withdraw from the course or no longer wish to receive notes.

For Faculty

If a student provides an accommodation letter to the instructor that indicates they have an accommodation for the use of a volunteer note taker, the instructor should work with the student to make a plan. In many cases, the faculty will need to make an announcement in their class asking if any students would be willing to copy their notes for a student in the class. **To protect confidentiality, please do not identify this student to the class.** A statement such as, “If anyone is willing to share a copy of his or her notes with a fellow student who is in need of assistance, please see me after class.” In some instances, the student may have already attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain a note taker.

ODR suggests making extended efforts to engage a volunteer note taker and to consider providing an appropriate incentive (such as extra credit or service recognition) for volunteer students who provide this additional service to their fellow student(s), even if the announcement is not successful the first time it is made to the class. It may be worthwhile to consider group- or class-wide incentives to split this responsibility amongst several students, should several students step up and take the opportunity to volunteer. It may also be worthwhile to consider the advantages to developing ways to facilitate sharing notes as a class to build an inclusive classroom experience while providing additional study tools for all students. If requested, ODR can also come in to speak with the class to assist with engaging a volunteer for note taking support for a student.

The volunteer note taker should make arrangements with the faculty member to provide them with a copy of their notes, and the faculty member should plan for a way to provide this copy of notes to the student with the accommodation in a timely manner.

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