

# Testing Accommodations Handbook

**OTR<sup>®</sup> COTA<sup>®</sup>**

**NBCOT<sup>®</sup>** National Board  
for Certification in  
Occupational Therapy

# NBCOT Testing Accommodations Handbook



NBCOT® certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) under their Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs.



NBCOT has also been awarded accreditation by the International Accreditation Service (IAS) for demonstrating compliance with ISO/IEC Standard 17024:2012, Conformity Assessment – General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons.

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AOTCB/NBCOT Exams ID 62 rev121523

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**All general correspondence, including requests for information concerning NBCOT Testing Accommodations (TAs), should be directed to:**

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# Overview

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), NBCOT® provides reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations (TAs) for exam candidates with disabilities who are otherwise eligible to take the OTR® or COTA® certification examination.

Testing accommodations are changes to the regular testing environment, and auxiliary aids and services that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level on standardized exams or high-stakes tests. Reasonable testing accommodations do not compromise the validity of the examination, jeopardize examination integrity and security, fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills and knowledge the examination is intended to test, or impose an undue burden on NBCOT. Accommodations cannot be made to the actual content of the examination.

Some personal items such as medical devices and medication do not require a formal request for testing accommodations. Please refer to the list below for standard items that do not require a request for testing accommodations.

**Pearson VUE** – [Comfort Aid List](#)

For questions regarding testing accommodations, please contact [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org).

## Standard Exam Administration

A standard NBCOT certification examination is a four-hour, computer-based exam taken in-person at a Pearson Professional Center. Pearson VUE is NBCOT's exclusive test administration partner. The test center's standard testing environment provides a quiet, limited/reduced distraction test space with continual monitoring throughout the exam.

During the exam, candidates will be able to highlight text in the passage area that they feel is important to refer back to as they progress through the exam. A strike out feature is also available to help candidates visually eliminate possible options from consideration. Candidates have the option to modify the color scheme by changing the background and text colors of the exam at any time. Candidates can also adjust the screen brightness and change the size of the content by zooming in or out on the screen. For details on these features, as well as additional functionality of the exam in the computer-based testing environment, [view the online exam tutorial\(s\)](#).

# Who Can Request Testing Accommodations for the OTR® or COTA® Examination?

Candidates with a documented disability as defined by the ADA may request testing accommodations. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (such as the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system)” when compared to most people in the general population. A diagnosed disability does not automatically necessitate testing accommodations.

The decision as to whether testing accommodations are recommended for a NBCOT exam candidate is determined by the candidate’s qualified healthcare professional. A qualified healthcare professional is licensed and/or certified to assess, diagnose, and treat the applicant’s relevant disability. If testing accommodations are recommended, candidates must make the request in their exam application and include supporting documentation from their qualified healthcare professional.

Under the ADA (revised 2008), test anxiety is **not** considered a disability under federal law. Candidates requesting testing accommodations related to anxiety must be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder that is more generalized and must include examples of how the anxiety creates a disability in other areas of their life, beyond testing.

Non-specific diagnoses such as individual learning styles, general learning differences, academic challenges, computer phobias, slow reading, test difficulty or test anxiety (see above paragraph) in and of themselves do not constitute a disability or impairment and are not covered under the ADA.

English as a second language is not covered under the ADA.

Accommodations may be approved for candidates with documented qualifying temporary medical conditions not otherwise covered by the ADA. Candidates with temporary and transitory conditions should contact NBCOT at [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org) as soon as possible. The decision as to whether a medical condition not covered by the ADA is a “qualifying medical condition” for purposes of a NBCOT testing accommodations approval is at the sole discretion of NBCOT.

Pregnancy, in and of itself, is not considered a disability under ADA. However, accommodations may be approved for candidates with documented qualifying temporary medical conditions such as pregnancy with medical complications or impairment.

**Nursing candidates:** NBCOT supports candidates who require a break to express or pump breast milk during their exam. Candidates must make a testing accommodations request in their NBCOT application and be approved for testing accommodations to express or pump during their exam appointment. This ensures Pearson VUE can coordinate private space in the test center for this accommodation. Approval of this accommodation may require candidates to schedule their exam at a different test center than their preferred location.

# How to Request Testing Accommodations for NBCOT Exams

## 1. Read the [Certification Exam Handbook](#) available at [nbcot.org](http://nbcot.org).

The Certification Exam Handbook provides information on a standard NBCOT exam administration.

## 2. Review our list of personal items that do not require a testing accommodations request.

- ▶ Pearson VUE – [Comfort Aid List](#)

## 3. Gather all required supporting documentation.

Supporting documentation from a qualified healthcare professional must be submitted with each reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations request as outlined in [“Required Documentation for Testing Accommodations Requests” on page 9](#). Candidates are encouraged to gather all documentation prior to applying for the exam.

## 4. Open a NBCOT Certification Examination application.

Go to [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org).

- ▶ **If applying for the first time**, create a MyNBCOT account as outlined in the *Application Process* section of the [Certification Exam Handbook](#).
- ▶ **If you have an existing MyNBCOT account**, log in using your unique email address and password, then follow steps to apply or reapply.

## 5. Request Testing Accommodations in your exam application.

- ▶ Select “Yes” when asked if testing accommodations are required.
- ▶ Answer all presented questions.
- ▶ If you were granted testing accommodations during previous educational and testing experiences (e.g., college/graduate school, GRE), click “yes” and add a reference for previously granted TAs to include: year(s) of accommodation, Name of Institution/Organization, and Type of Accommodation(s).

## 6. Upload required supporting documentation.

To protect the confidentiality of testing accommodation requests and all supporting documentation, candidates must upload all required documentation to the Testing Accommodations section of their exam application.

- ▶ **First time testing accommodations requests:** Candidates requesting testing accommodations for the first time, whether a new applicant or reapplying, must upload all required documentation as outlined on [pages 9-10](#) before continuing with the exam application.
- ▶ **Previously approved candidates** who wish to request new testing accommodations for their next exam attempt should refer to [“Reapplying With Previously Approved Testing Accommodations” on page 8](#).
- ▶ Do not email NBCOT personal medical documentation. If a document will not upload, please contact [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org).

7. Read and confirm the Declaration and Authorization statements.

8. Monitor the email account listed in your MyNBCOT profile.

Testing accommodations requests are reviewed after an exam application is submitted and in the order they are received. NBCOT emails candidates when additional documentation is requested and/or a Testing Accommodations Approval Notice is ready for review in the candidate's exam application. We recommend checking your email, including your spam/junk folder, regularly for the emails from NBCOT.

## NBCOT's Testing Accommodations Review Process

Approval of testing accommodations requests are based on the candidate's request, the diagnosis of their disability or temporary medical condition or impairment and supporting documentation from their qualified healthcare professional(s).

Candidates must submit documentation to support **each** testing accommodation request. Please refer to [pages 9-10](#) for details about the required documentation.

NBCOT may request additional documentation at any time from the candidate and/or their qualified healthcare professional(s) to support the requested testing accommodations. NBCOT cannot communicate with a third party (e.g., parent, spouse, program director) unless the candidate is also present and provides verbal permission.

An initial review is completed within 10 business days from the exam application submission date, though reviews may take longer during busy times. Requests are reviewed in the order they are received and only after an exam application is submitted. Candidates are notified by email if additional documentation is needed and when their Testing Accommodations Approval Notice is available in their exam application for review.

### ACCEPTING YOUR TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS APPROVAL NOTICE

Upon approval of a candidate's testing accommodations request, the candidate will receive an email advising them to log into their MyNBCOT student dashboard to **read and review** their Approval Notice.

- **The Approval Notice is available in the Testing Accommodations section of the exam application.**
- **The candidate is expected to read the Approval Notice in full to include the IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS section, which details unique information and instructions regarding approved testing accommodations.**
- If the candidate understands and agrees to the approved TA and instructions provided, click "I accept."
- If the candidate does not agree with the approved TA, they reserve the right to request an additional review within seven days of receiving the Approval Notice by contacting NBCOT at [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org). The decision resulting from an additional review is considered final.

After a candidate accepts their Approval Notice **and** all other exam application documentation is approved (e.g., academic verification documentation, background check), they will receive an **Authorization to Test (ATT) with Testing Accommodations letter** via email and in their MyNBCOT student dashboard. This letter authorizes the candidate to schedule an exam appointment with NBCOT's test administration partner.

## REQUESTING TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS AFTER RECEIVING AN ATT LETTER

If a candidate receives their ATT letter and needs to request testing accommodations due to an unforeseen medical diagnosis/complication or temporary impairment, they should email [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org) as soon as possible to discuss next steps.

## WITHDRAWING A TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS REQUEST

Candidates can withdraw a testing accommodations request at any time before receiving their ATT letter. Log in to your MyNBCOT student dashboard. Click View My Exam Application, expand the Testing Accommodations section, then click the *Withdraw TA* button.

## SCHEDULING A NBCOT EXAM APPOINTMENT WITH TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

To schedule a NBCOT exam appointment with testing accommodations, a candidate **MUST** have received an **Authorization to Test (ATT) with Testing Accommodations letter**.

It is imperative that candidates with testing accommodations read and follow the scheduling instructions outlined in their ATT letter and Testing Accommodations Approval Notice. Both the ATT letter and Testing Accommodations Approval Notice are available in the candidate's MyNBCOT account.

Some testing accommodations require special coordination with Pearson VUE. Candidates will receive scheduling instructions in their NBCOT Testing Accommodations Approval Notice if their appointment requires additional coordination with Pearson VUE after receipt of their ATT letter.

### What to Expect Scheduling with Pearson VUE

- Candidates with testing accommodations should begin the scheduling process by clicking the *Access Pearson VUE* button located on their MyNBCOT student dashboard.
- Pearson VUE will display your approved testing accommodation(s) on your Pearson VUE dashboard. Please review the listed testing accommodation(s). Contact NBCOT at [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org) if there are any questions or discrepancies from your NBCOT Testing Accommodations Approval Notice.
- If your testing accommodations require you to schedule by phone, you will be notified on the Pearson VUE dashboard, and the phone number will be provided.

## REAPPLYING WITH PREVIOUSLY APPROVED TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Candidates reapplying for the exam with previously approved testing accommodations will be presented with their pre-approved TAs in the Testing Accommodations section of the exam application.

When presented with the question "Do you require testing accommodations?" pre-approved candidates click the Yes response to review their pre-approved TAs. Candidates may select some or all of their previously approved testing accommodations. If you are requesting **ONLY** pre-approved testing accommodations, **do not** click the *Request New Testing Accommodations* button. Click the *Continue* button to advance through the exam application.



Previously approved candidates requesting new/additional testing accommodations complete the following steps:

- Select the desired pre-approved testing accommodations from the list.
- Click the *Request New Testing Accommodations* button in the Testing Accommodations section of the exam application.
- Update questions #1-4 to include the new testing accommodations request. Do not delete any previous requests in Question 1.
- Upload all required supporting documentation as outlined on pages 9-10.

# Required Documentation for Testing Accommodations Requests

Supporting documentation must include all the items listed below.

*Candidates do not need to be retested for their stated diagnosis.*

1. Name and credentials of the qualified healthcare professional(s) that qualify them to assess, diagnose, and treat the relevant disability.
  - Include license and/or certification number.
2. Contact information of each qualified healthcare professional providing documentation.
  - Include address, phone number and email address.
3. Specific and professionally recognized disability diagnosis.
  - Include candidate's diagnosis, DSM/diagnosis code, and diagnosis date.
  - Include results of testing/assessments leading to diagnosis, dated within the past seven years\*.
4. Description of how the candidate's disability affects one or more major life activities as compared to most people in the general population.
5. Explanation of how the candidate's disability impairs their ability to test under NBCOT's standard testing conditions, as outlined in the "Exam Day: Questions & Answers" section of the [Certification Exam Handbook](#).
6. Document testing accommodations approved for prior standardized testing.
  - If no prior accommodations exist, the qualified healthcare professional should include an explanation as to why no accommodations were given in the past and are needed now.
7. Specific recommendations for reasonable testing accommodations.
  - If extra time is intended for stop the clock breaks rather than additional exam time, this should be specifically stated.
  - If an exam time extension is recommended, please be as specific as possible (e.g., one additional hour, time and a half), avoiding non-specific recommendations like "extra, additional, more, extended."

8. Detailed explanation of why each accommodation is necessary to minimize the impact of the disability while taking a NBCOT exam.

### **Examples of documentation to submit for review:**

- NBCOT Testing Accommodations Request Form with qualified healthcare professional cover letter and/or office stamp or digital signature (Recommended, see appendix A);
- Letter from qualified healthcare professional including all required documentation elements, dated within the past seven years\*;
- A report (e.g., psychological or neuropsychological evaluation) prepared by a qualified healthcare professional, dated within the past seven years\*;
- Documentation of testing accommodations for a similar high-stakes exam such as GRE, LSAT, or MCAT;
- Documentation of testing accommodations due to disability in an IEP, Section 504 Plan, or documented accommodations from a private school.

*\*Some documentation dated outside of seven years may be considered based on diagnosis.*

### **Examples of Unacceptable Forms of Documentation**

- Handwritten letters
- Handwritten patient records or notes from patient charts
- Diagnosis on prescription pads
- Self-evaluations found online or in print
- Correspondence from educational institutions or testing agencies not directly addressed to NBCOT

# Appendix A

## TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS REQUEST FORM

A fillable form is available for download at <https://www.nbcot.org/exam/accommodations>

# Testing Accommodations Request Form

ID 71 rev121423

Dear Healthcare Professional:

The exam candidate identified below is requesting testing accommodations to take a National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT<sup>®</sup>) Certification Examination and is submitting documentation prepared by you in connection with their request.

NBCOT requires supporting documentation from qualified healthcare professional(s) licensed and/or certified to assess, diagnose, and treat the applicant's relevant disability.

### Exam Candidate Information

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY): \_\_\_\_\_

### Healthcare Professional Contact Information

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Licensure/Certification Information

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

License/Certification Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Disability Diagnosis

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

Disability Diagnosis	DSM/Diagnostic Code	Diagnosis Date

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**Disability Impact**

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

<p>Describe how the candidate's disability affects one or more major life activities (outside of testing) as compared to most people in the general population.</p>	
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<p>Explain how the candidate's disability impairment impacts their ability to test under NBCOT's standard testing conditions, as outlined in the "Exam Day: Questions and Answers" section of the <a href="#">Certification Exam Handbook</a>.</p> <p><i>(Standard exam is 4-hour computer-based exam taken in a reduced-distraction testing center.)</i></p>	
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**Prior Testing Accommodations**

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

<p>Document what testing accommodations have been approved for prior standardized testing (e.g., SAT, GRE, college exams).</p> <p>If no prior accommodations exist, the qualified healthcare professional should include an explanation as to why no accommodations were given in the past and are needed now.</p>	
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**Testing Accommodations Recommendation(s)**  
***(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)***

Please document **specific** recommendations for reasonable testing accommodations based on applicant’s disability diagnosis along with an explanation of why each accommodation is necessary to minimize the impact of disability while taking an NBCOT® exam.

- If an exam time extension is recommended, please **be specific (e.g., one additional hour, time and a half), avoiding non-specific** recommendations like “extra, additional, more, extended”.
- If extra time is intended for stop the clock breaks rather than additional exam time, this should be specifically stated.

Specific recommendation(s) for reasonable testing accommodations	Explanation why this accommodation is necessary to minimize impact of disability while taking an NBCOT® exam

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**Declaration**

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

I hereby certify that the above information is true and is given pursuant to the authorization to release information by the above-named candidate. I attest I have specific training and experience in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of the disability identified above. I hereby certify I personally completed this form and provided specific recommendations for reasonable testing accommodations for the NBCOT exam. I may be asked by NBCOT to verify the above information at any time.

**IMPORTANT — This document is considered void without the healthcare professional’s signature.**

**This document must include one of the following: digital signature with timestamp, a cover letter on practice letterhead to accompany this form, or official office stamp below.**

**Signature of Healthcare Professional:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name of Healthcare Professional:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Office Stamp

