# Neurodiversity Teaching Strategies

## Reduce complexity

* Use headings
* Short paragraphs & sentences
* Simple, clear language; avoid jargon and idioms
* Avoid acronyms, spell them out

## Simple course design

* Clear action items: establish one place to go to find deadlines, what’s current, what’s next
* Give advanced notice and multiple reminders for upcoming assignments, tests, etc.
* Consistent formatting for assignments

## Course content

* Break lectures into shorter chunks with breaks in between. Long lectures can be overwhelming
* Provide clear, step by step instructions for assignments, activities, etc.
* Provide detailed grading rubrics. Be clear on expectations.

## Clear outlines & timelines

* Provide outlines of each lesson at the beginning of class (or agendas for meetings)
* Give estimated timelines for each topic (or agenda items)
* Stay on track with outlines and agendas, and avoid tangents when possible

## Consider sensory needs

* Try to eliminate background noise, harsh or flickering lighting, visual distractions, color clashes, etc.
* Allow fidget toys and movement breaks to help students focus.

## Provide content ahead of time

* Share lecture slides, notes, handouts, etc. ahead of time.
* This allows students to follow along and process information more easily

## Provide multiple formats

* Provide info verbally & written, in print & online
* Provide alternative formats: PDF, Word, html, EPUB
* Use visual aids like charts, graphs, images etc. where possible, including a Graphic Syllabus; visuals can help concepts stick better.
* Record your lectures, either in advance or the live lecture, and provide a recorded copy with captions for students to reference later.
* Consider alternative exam formats: oral exams, presentations, create a website, etc.

## Follow accessibility & UDL best practices

* Check your instruction materials follow accessibility best practices including alt-text, color contrast, heading structure, intuitive hyperlinks, etc.
* Utilize Universal Design for Learning guidelines, which helps make instruction more accessible to all students.

## Questionnaires & Feedback from students

* Use questionnaires for all students, before class or before an individual consultation
* Ask about pronouns and how to be addressed, preferences, anything I need to know to best support you
* University of Colorado Boulder also has a [great example of a questionnaire with sample questions](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/sites/default/files/attached-files/accessibility_survey_questions_.pdf) to ask students at the beginning of the semester, with some questions to consider related to technology and accessibility. They also have a [shorter version about technology & accessibility](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1153aGbKo56ovC5Vq-R88C0qMVdRZauEqyFiqG-zO9fc/viewform?edit_requested=true).
* Harvard also has a [quick check-in survey to assess student well-being](https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/covid-check-in-survey).

## Ask about sensory needs

* Ask what’s been helpful and allowed them to be successful in the past
* Opens the door to self-advocacy, but doesn’t put the burden solely on the individual to bring up their preferences, etc.
* Ask for feedback multiple times throughout the semester.

## Share resources

* Share information about the Office of Accessibility Services and accommodations that students can pursue if it would be helpful.
* Share tools available to students, including software such as Read & Write Gold.
* Offer individual help: research consultations, chat, email

## Mainly, it boils down to: get organized, and plan ahead

* It’s challenging to find the time to get organized and stay organized, in the midst of an overwhelming to-do list.
* If you have too many other things on your plate and never seem to make the time, it could be helpful to make this a project and call it something like “review and revamping instruction with accessibility best practices, to support neurodivergent learners”
* If you need help prioritizing and saying no, use the [Essentialism Toolkit: Doing Less to Accomplish What Matters](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10WN9ezb0lXUfPKs_PKXeEPFKK9nnW0-cXJfW7yS11ow/edit?usp=sharing)

Reference: Montana State University Neurodiversity Resources https://guides.lib.montana.edu/neurodiversity/TeachingStrategies