

## Know Before You Go!

### College Readiness Checklist for Autistic Students

Are you ready to launch your college journey? Use this checklist to assess your readiness, SMU-style!

1. Check off what you've already mastered in the 30-question **Checklist**.
2. Score your readiness in your **Launch Level**.
3. Match the numbers of the items you need help with to the **Resource Map**.
4. Take action!

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**Tip:** This checklist isn't a test, it's a map. Bring it to your DASS intake meeting to help us build your college support plan. For additional SMU department support use the DASS guide *Help Finder: Connect with the Right SMU Resource*.

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## Checklist

### Section 1. Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy

1. ☐ I can explain my characteristics and how they affect me in classes or daily life.
2. ☐ I can describe what supports I need and why they help me.
3. ☐ I feel confident asking for help from others, like professors, SMU staff, and peers.
4. ☐ I know how to send a professional email to ask for support or attend office hours and ask for support.
5. ☐ I have practiced or role-played self-advocating in a school setting and was successful in implementing my learned skills.

### Section 2. Executive Function and Daily Life Skills

6. ☐ I use a planner, calendar, or phone to track **ALL** assignments and events in one place to avoid schedule conflicts.
7. ☐ I can manage multiple deadlines without reminders from others.
8. ☐ I can wake up on time using an alarm and complete all hygienic tasks without missing class.
9. ☐ I can do laundry, prepare meals, and clean up my space.
10. ☐ I know how to create a weekly routine that works for me.

### **Section 3. Academic Preparation**

- 11. ☐ I know how to read and follow a syllabus to stay up to date with my classes.
- 12. ☐ I manage long-term assignments without daily reminders from others.
- 13. ☐ I know how and when to contact my Disability Services coordinator, my professor, or my academic advisor.
- 14. ☐ I understand professors won't know I need help unless I ask.
- 15. ☐ I know when to use DASS Coaching to become more independent with my academics.

### **Section 4. Social and Emotional Readiness**

- 16. ☐ I know my sensory triggers or communication concerns and how to manage them.
- 17. ☐ I know when to use my strategies to manage stress or overload, and I am usually successful using them.
- 18. ☐ I know how much social interaction I want or need and how to balance it effectively with my academics.
- 19. ☐ I know when and how to take a break once overwhelmed and can restart the task afterwards.
- 20. ☐ I know how to find friends and maintain relationships.

### **Section 5. Parental Involvement and Independence**

- 21. ☐ I make my own appointments and send my own emails.
- 22. ☐ I try to solve problems before they become too big to solve myself, and I ask for help from the appropriate department.
- 23. ☐ My parent supports me like a coach, not a manager.
- 24. ☐ I understand I am primarily responsible for my records which are private, and I need to sign a FERPA release if I want my parents to assist me with anything from this point forward.
- 25. ☐ I learn from small mistakes or setbacks.

### **Section 6. Getting Accommodations at SMU**

- 26. ☐ I know how to register with DASS.
- 27. ☐ I have my disability-related documentation or know how to get it.
- 28. ☐ I understand that accommodations in high school may differ from those in college.
- 29. ☐ I've looked at the [smu.edu/dass](http://smu.edu/dass) website and met with a DASS staff member or Coordinator.
- 30. ☐ I'm prepared to talk to professors about my accommodations.

## **Launch Level**

Score Your Readiness – how many did you check off?

### **25–30: Ready to Launch!**

- Finalize accommodations with DASS
- Engage in Mustang Connect or a student group using SMU 360
- Find places around campus to study

### **20–25: Almost There!**

*All of the above, plus:*

- Attend SMU or A-LEC academic workshops
- Practice emailing professors by introducing yourself
- Set up your task-management system
- Use DASS Link to schedule a consultation with your DASS Coordinator or the DASS Learning Specialist about the transition to college

### **25-15: Needs Support**

*All of the above, plus:*

- Enroll in the fall section of UNIV 1210 led by the DASS Learning Specialist
- Request executive function coaching from the DASS Learning Specialist
- Work with your DASS Coordinator or the DASS learning Specialist on a weekly check-in routine
- Use planning apps like Google Calendar

### **Under 15: Just Starting**

*All of the above, plus:*

- Seek out additional support during the summer; consider hiring a private executive functioning coach for more intensive wrap-around services during the term
- Living on campus? Take time to meet the Residential Commons Director (RCD) of your building; Live locally? Consider living at home your first year to reduce being overwhelmed by too much change
- Set up a supportive family plan to help with overstimulation and social interactions
- Set small goals at first (e.g., email a professor, try a planner), then build to bigger ones

## **Resource Map: Corresponding Action Steps**

### **Section 1. Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy**

*SMU Support: Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS)*

1. Practice how to talk about your characteristics/condition in a DASS intake appointment.
2. Review your accommodation letter and understand each support tool.
3. Meet with a DASS coach or mentor and Role-play asking for help from someone.
4. Use DASS email templates to help draft messages to professors.
5. Join a DASS Communication Workshop to improve self-advocacy skills.

### **Section 2. Executive Function and Daily Life Skills**

*SMU Support: Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (A-LEC), DASS, Residence Life*

6. Download a digital task manager or Google Calendar and log your assignments.
7. Learn how to backward-plan projects with an academic coach.
8. Set multiple alarms and build a morning routine that works for you.
9. Check with Residence Life for peer mentoring support or life skills tips and practice these tasks in the summer before you arrive on campus.
10. Request a weekly planning session with A-LEC staff or a DASS Coach.

### **Section 3. Academic Preparation**

*SMU Support: Academic Advising, A-LEC, DASS, SMU faculty*

11. Bring your syllabus to A-LEC staff or a DASS Coach for support organizing it.
12. Use long-term assignment planning sheets from A-LEC.
13. Save the email addresses from your “Help Finder: Connect with the Right SMU Resource” chart. Put them in your Contacts for easy access.
14. Discuss your needs with professors through email and during office hours.
15. Ask a DASS Coach how to learn new skills to gain independence.

#### **Section 4. Social and Emotional Readiness**

*SMU Support: Counseling Services, DASS, SMU 360, UNIV courses*

16. Create a sensory toolkit with a mental health counselor.
17. Schedule a Counseling Services appointment for stress support.
18. Join Mustang Connect and use SMU 360 to explore social opportunities.
19. Practice calming techniques and build in break times throughout your day.
20. Explore SMU 360 for clubs and social connections.

#### **Section 5. Parent Involvement and Independence**

*SMU Support: DASS, Office of the Dean of Students, Registrar*

21. Practice scheduling an appointment on your own in a DASS coaching session.
22. Use a problem-solving worksheet, and DASS guides – *Start Smart: What's New in College and How to Handle It* and *Help Finder: Connect with the Right SMU Resource* – before contacting parents.
23. Ask a DASS staff member for help navigating family communication.
24. Learn about FERPA information releases at [smu.edu/registrar](http://smu.edu/registrar).
25. Reflect on challenges and set micro-goals for improvement.

#### **Section 6. Getting Accommodations at SMU**

*SMU Support: DASS*

26. Apply for accommodations at [smu.edu/dass/apply](http://smu.edu/dass/apply).
27. Review documentation requirements on the DASS website.
28. Meet with a DASS Accommodations Coordinator to explore your options.
29. Read through the DASS website for helpful tools. FAQs are a good place to start!
30. Practice explaining your accommodations and needs clearly to professors.