

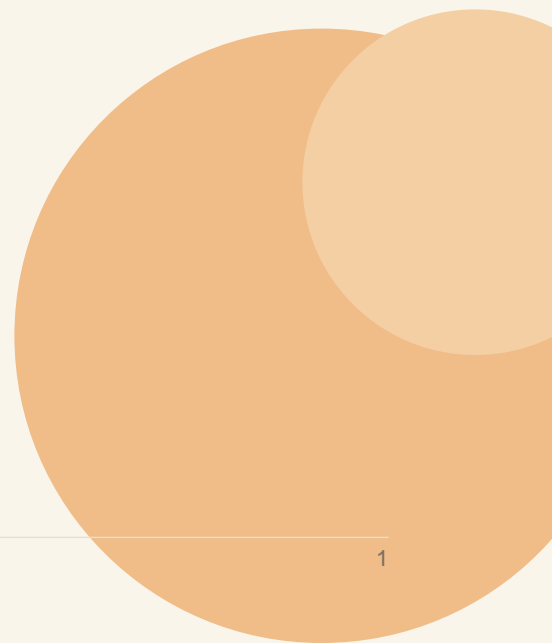


# The IEP Prep Checklist.

12 questions Merrie hands every parent before their first IEP meeting.

**BY MERRIE WEEKLEY · PARENTING THE SPECTRUM**

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# Before you read on

I taught special education in Florida public schools for eight years. I sat at hundreds of IEP meetings on the school's side of the table. I saw what got written when nobody pushed back. I also saw what got written when somebody did.

Then I became my son Jacob's mom, adopting a Level 3 autistic boy out of foster care. Suddenly I was the parent walking into a meeting I used to run. Even with eight years of inside knowledge, I still felt behind.

Most parents have none of that background and feel twice as behind.

This is the checklist I wish someone had handed me on day one. Twelve questions to answer before you walk into your first IEP meeting. Print it. Bring it. Use it.

— *Merrie*

## BEFORE THE MEETING

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### Did you get the draft IEP at least 3 days early?

The school is required to share the draft early enough for meaningful review. Receiving it at the table is not meaningful review. If they handed it to you in the meeting, that itself is a red flag.

### Do you have your child's latest evaluation in hand?

If the evaluation says your child needs 60 minutes of speech weekly and the IEP lists 30 minutes "consultation," the gap will not surface unless you have both documents side by side. Request the evaluation in writing if you don't have it.

### Do you know who will be at the meeting?

You can ask for the attendee list in advance. The IEP team usually includes a general-ed teacher, a special-ed teacher, an evaluator, and an administrator. Knowing who is in the room helps you know what to expect and who to direct questions to.

### Have you written down your top 3 priorities?

Bring a printed list of what matters most for your child this year. Without priorities written down, the meeting drifts to whatever the school wants to discuss. With them written down, you steer.

## INSIDE THE DOCUMENT

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### Are the goals measurable?

"Will improve reading skills" is not a goal. It can be checked off without anything changing. "Will read 90 words per minute on second-grade text with 95% accuracy by April" is a goal. Every goal needs a specific behavior, a target, and a deadline.

### Do the services match the evaluation?

"Consultation" means a therapist talks to the teacher. "Direct" means a therapist works with your child. Only one of those actually puts a therapist in front of your kid. Check the minutes too. Fewer minutes than the evaluation recommended is a red flag.

**Does it say "will be provided" or "will be considered"?**

"The team will consider sensory breaks as needed" means the team can decide not to provide them. "Sensory breaks will be available every 45 minutes during academic instruction" means the school is on the hook. Audit every "will consider" and ask why it isn't "will provide."

**Is the behavior plan teaching, not just punishing?**

A good Behavior Intervention Plan asks what the behavior communicates and teaches a replacement skill. A bad one is a list of consequences. Bad BIPs are especially harmful for autistic children whose behaviors are communication, not defiance.

**AT THE MEETING**

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**Are you bringing someone with you?**

You have the right to bring an advocate, family member, or trusted friend. Two sets of eyes catch more. Schools can feel intimidating when it's four staff members and one parent. Even a quiet supportive presence changes the dynamic.

**Are you taking notes on what's said?**

Track what gets said in the room versus what gets written into the document. The two are not always the same. If a team member promises something verbally, ask them to put it in the IEP.

**Did you ask for the Prior Written Notice in writing?**

Prior Written Notice (PWN) documents what the team proposes or refuses and why. It's your legal record. If anything is unclear after the meeting, the PWN tells you what was officially decided. Ask for it every time.

**Don't sign at the table.**

Write "I need time to review" on the consent line and take the IEP home. You have ten days. Compare it against this checklist. Then sign, or don't. Schools rarely volunteer this option. Take it anyway.

NEXT STEP

# Want a line-by-line audit?

If going through this checklist surfaced things that worry you, the Red Flag Audit is the next step. Merrie does a full written audit of your child's specific IEP, then walks you through every red flag on a 60-minute review call. Every vague goal rewritten, every missing service identified, every concern named.

**BOOK YOUR RED FLAG AUDIT - \$200**

[Or book a \\$99 Coaching Session first](#)