# Support without takeover

A family field guide for the college years

College can involve more complicated decisions, but adulthood is not a switch that turns support off. The goal is support the student can shape, use, and gradually own.

## 10 PRACTICAL MOVES

### 1 Ask what success means to them

Their goals might include a credential, transfer, work, confidence, relationships, or learning to navigate everyday college life.

### 2 Get permission before problem-solving

Try “Do you want me to listen, brainstorm, rehearse the conversation, or leave it with you?” Do not confuse help with taking control.

### 3 Agree on check-in boundaries

Decide together when to text or call, what topics are welcome, and when a parent should step in for urgent safety needs.

### 4 Practice, then hand over

Role-play a difficult email or meeting. Let the student send the email, ask the question, or schedule the appointment where possible.

### 5 Learn the college privacy rules

FERPA rights generally transfer to the student upon postsecondary enrollment, with exceptions. Parent involvement is not automatically identical to K–12.

### 6 Know the support network

Find the college’s disability/access office, tutoring, advising, counseling, and career services. Help the student choose whom to contact.

### 7 Help design routines, not surveillance

A mutually agreed calendar, transport checklist, or weekly planning conversation can build ownership. Avoid monitoring every assignment by default.

### 8 Keep disclosure in their hands

Ask how they wish to describe themselves and what they are comfortable sharing. Respect disability identity and privacy choices.

### 9 Treat setbacks as practice

A failed exam, missed bus, or awkward conversation is information. Discuss the repair step before assigning a permanent meaning to it.

### 10 Plan for changing support

Review what help is useful each term. The right amount may rise or fall with course load, health, employment, and life circumstances.

**Read the full guide: ttwnest.org/for/families/**

**Questions, suggestions, or corrections? info@ttwnest.org**

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## PUT IT INTO WORDS

### When a student misses an important deadline

**LESS HELPFUL**

“Give me your password. I will email the professor and fix this.”

**TRY THIS INSTEAD**

“Do you want to draft the message together, practice the conversation, or handle it yourself? I can help you think through the options.”

The student remains the decision-maker while knowing support is available.

## FIVE-MINUTE ACTION CHECKLIST

- [ ] Ask the student what they want from college this term.
- [ ] Agree on a predictable communication plan.
- [ ] Identify campus support contacts together.
- [ ] Practice one self-advocacy conversation without taking it over.
- [ ] Review the support plan together after a few weeks.

## WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

U.S. Department of Education guidance explains the postsecondary accommodation process and FERPA student privacy. Dwyer provides a useful framework for understanding neurodiversity without treating all neurodivergent people as interchangeable.

## BOUNDARIES AND CAVEATS

Avoid turning independence into unsupported isolation. Privacy, consent, immediate safety concerns, and disability-related needs require context-sensitive decisions.

SOURCE STARTERS: U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) · U.S. Department of Education (2011) · Dwyer (2022)

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