

Return to Academics Protocol after Concussion/Mild TBI

After a concussion, teachers might be unaware of a student's cognitive difficulties during recovery because s/he looks normal. Rest is needed for the brain to recover from a concussion. Taxing the brain with academic activity can impede or prolong recovery. Most students will recover fully in a few days or weeks, but some will take longer to heal. Each brain injury is different. If full recovery is not evident in three months, an IEP might be helpful to meet a student's specific learning challenges.

Not all students will need academic accommodations following concussion; consult with each student's healthcare provider. All steps in this academic protocol must be completed before a student-athlete is ready to proceed to a return-to-play protocol.

Step 1. Total rest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mental exertion (computer, texting, video games, or homework), stay at home, no driving.
Step 2. Light mental activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 30 minutes of mental exertion but no prolonged concentration, stay at home, no driving. • Progress to next level when able to handle 30 minutes of mental exertion without worsening of symptoms.
Step 3. Part-time school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum accommodations (shortened day/schedule, built-in breaks, provide quiet place for mental rest, no significant classroom or standardized testing, modify rather than postpone academics, and provide extra time, extra help, and modified assignments). • Progress to next level when able to handle 30–40 minutes of mental exertion without worsening of symptoms.
Step 4. Part-time school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate accommodations (no standardized testing, modified classroom testing, moderate decrease in extra time, help, and modification of assignments). • Progress to next level when able to handle 60 minutes of mental exertion without worsening of symptoms.
Step 5. Full-time school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal accommodations (no standardized testing, but routine testing ok; continued decreasing extra time, help, and modification of assignments; might require more supports in academically challenging subjects). • Progress to next level when able to handle all class periods in succession without worsening of symptoms AND medical clearance is given for full return to academics.
Step 6. Full-time school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full academics with no accommodations (attends all classes, full homework).

Should symptoms continue beyond 3–4 weeks, prolonged in-school support is required. Request a 504 meeting to plan and coordinate. If you have questions, contact Oregon's TBI coordinator at 1-877-872-7246.

REMEMBER

Progression is individual. Every concussion is different. Students can start at any step as symptoms dictate and remain at each step as long as needed. Return to previous step if symptoms worsen. No return-to-play protocol should be implemented until after the student has returned to full academics.