

# Top Ten Tips for Parent Advocacy

10. Be proactive, not reactive!  
*Plan for the future, anticipate issues/problems and think long term.*
9. Be a problem solver, not a problem maker!  
*If you have a problem to discuss, always have possible solutions ready to share. If you don't, solutions offered by others might be worse than the original problem.*
8. Think win/win, not lose/lose!  
*Use strategies that allow everyone to think they've won.*
7. Become a "regular" parent!  
*Join the PTA, volunteer in school if you can, help plan school events. Let school personnel and other parents see you as a "regular" parent, not just a "special education Mom or Dad." Develop friendships with parents who don't have children with disabilities. They can be your best allies.*
6. Develop and nurture relationships with school personnel!  
*Take time to know the people at school, in person or over the phone. Talk to them regularly, not just when there are problems.*
5. Change the atmosphere to change the outcome!  
*Be creative in planning the IEP meeting. Be active, not passive. Have the meeting in a neutral territory.*
4. Write your "report" before the meeting!  
*Detail needs and goals from your intimate knowledge of your child. Include in your report: suggested modifications, adaptations, and related services. Your perspective is valuable and critical when writing the IEP at the meeting.*
3. Be specific about what your child needs!  
*Do your homework. Study up on your child's disability and be able to speak about your child's learning style, and other needs in order for him/her to be able to benefit from their education.*
2. Remember to use these keys to success!  
*Be assertive and respectful  
Combine style with substance  
Do your research and know your child's need*
1. Remember this is all about your child and her/his future!  
*When the going gets rough and emotions are high, don't take things personally. It's not about egos, winning or losing, or who's right or who's wrong. Hold your head high, maintain your composure, and focus on what's really important: your child's future.*