



Starting high school is a big change and something that makes almost everyone nervous! It's also an exciting time – a time for experiencing new things and making new friends. To help prepare for high school, we've created a list of our top tips.



Practice addressing questions about hand differences

When starting high school, kids are going to be meeting new people who have probably never seen a hand or arm like theirs before. After being with the same people at school for the past seven years, this might cause some anxiety.

It can be helpful to have an answer ready for curious people when they ask about their hand difference. Answers can be as honest, funny, or creative as they would like.

Practising responses with loved ones through role play can also be helpful.

'I was born this way'

'Well, I was cooking dinner one night and...'

'A crocodile ate it!'

'A big thing for me was to answer people's questions or to introduce myself and my hand difference early. I found that this stopped any whispering behind my back or staring. By the end of year 7, my friends would sometimes even forget I had a hand difference, I was just like everyone else.'

- Aussie Hands member, Tia



Get to know the school

It can be a good idea to have a tour of the school before the year officially starts. Knowing where classrooms are and what teachers are like means there is one less thing to worry about on the first day.

Most high schools will have a transition program which is a great opportunity to get to know the school before starting.

Be aware of reasonable adjustments

A big difference between high school and primary school is that in high school students get to choose some of their subjects. It is good to know that your school is not allowed to discriminate against anyone because of their hand difference, and no subject should be off-limits.

The school must make sure that reasonable adjustments are made so that people with a hand difference can participate in the same activities as their classmates. This can include things like using an electric whisk in food class instead of a regular whisk or using a prosthetic during sport.

It might be helpful if a parent/guardian has a conversation with the school principal before the school year so that they are aware and any necessary provisions can be put in place.

Kids should also know that if they feel like they need an adjustment to be made for them, they can let their teacher or a trusted adult know.

Identify trusted adults

While growing up, everybody should have older people in their lives that they can trust. This could be parents, a teacher, an aunt, or a friend.

An Aussie Hands teacher recommended that kids create a list of 5 adults that they know they can talk to about anything. This can encourage them to reach out if anything happens at school that is unfair or makes them uncomfortable.



Additional Resources For Parents

Reasonable Adjustments:

Australian Government. (2021, March). Disability Standards for Education 2005. Department of Education, Skills and Employment. <https://www.dese.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>

Education Services Australia. (2021). Reasonable adjustments. Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. <https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/reasonable-adjustments>

Victoria State Government. (2020, September). Reasonable adjustments. Education and Training. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/additional-needs/Pages/disability-adjustments.aspx>

General Advice:

Raising Children. (2021, September). Starting secondary school. Raising Children Network. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/school-education/school-choosing-starting-moving/starting-secondary-school>

ReachOut. (2021). Tips for starting high school. ReachOut Australia. <https://au.reachout.com/articles/tips-for-starting-high-school>