

SOPs That Matter:

Supporting Postsecondary Employment Through Effective Summary of Performance Writing

Jessica Sipovic, M.Ed. | ICTW Training Specialist

**Illinois Center for Transition and Work
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

When students leave high school, what information do adult providers and/or colleges really need to know about them?



Why the Summary of Performance Matters

What is a Summary of Performance

A Summary of Performance (SOP) is a document completed during a student's exit year from high school / transition program.

It helps students transition to:

- Postsecondary education
- Employment
- Training programs
- Independent living supports



Legal Requirement (IDEA 2004)

Under IDEA 2004, schools must provide a Summary of Performance when:

- A student graduates
or
- A student ages out of eligibility

The SOP must be completed in the final year before exit and provided to the student (or parent/guardian).



Who Needs an SOP?

Required for all students receiving services through an IEP, when

1. Graduating with a regular diploma, certificate, or modified diploma
2. Aging out of IDEA services



Timeline for Completing the SOP

The SOP must be completed during the student's final year of school.

To ensure the information is current and useful for postsecondary providers, it is ideally within 3 months of graduation/exit.



Why the SOP is Important

The SOP is written for:

- Postsecondary disability services
- Employers
- Adult service agencies
- The student and family

To better understand the students:

- Strengths
- Needs
- Effective accommodations
- Supports needed for success



Entitlement vs Eligibility

- In high school/transition programs, students receive services under IDEA (entitlement)
- After graduation, services are determined by eligibility under ADA
- Postsecondary providers may review and of the following documents to determine accommodations or appropriate services:
 - SOP
 - IEP
 - Evaluation reports



Overview of SOP Components

Key Sections of the SOP

1. Student Information
2. Postsecondary Goals
3. Academic Achievement & Functional Performance
4. Recommendations for Post-School
5. Student Perspective
6. Post-School Data Collection



Writing Each SOP Section

Student Information Section

Student
Name

Date of Birth

Graduation /
Exit Year

Address /
Contact Info

School
Information

Person
Completing
Form

Date of Most
Recent IEP

Disability
(optional)



Best Practices: Student Information

- ✓ Ensure information is accurate and current
- ✓ Confirm contact information with family
- ✓ Review auto-populated fields carefully
- ✓ Include correct graduation year



Postsecondary Goals Section

Identify the student's goals in:

- Postsecondary education and/or training
- Employment
- Independent living



Best Practices: Postsecondary Goals

- ✓ Goals should be student-driven
- ✓ Align with transition plan in the IEP
- ✓ Goals should be realistic and measurable

Often they can be copied from the transition section of the IEP, if still appropriate.



Academic Achievement & Functional Performance Section

Academic Achievement

Summarize current abilities in reading, math, academic skills.

Include strengths, impact of disability, and most recent assessment results.

Functional Performance

Describe areas such as:

- Behavior
- Social skills
- Executive functioning
- Daily/independent living skills
- Participation
- Communication skills
- Vocational / career skills



Best Practices: Academic & Functional Summaries

- ✓ Include specific examples
- ✓ Reference recent assessments
- ✓ Describe strengths and needs
- ✓ Explain how the disability impacts functioning



Recommendations for Post-School Section

Provide recommendations for supports in:

- Postsecondary education or vocational training
- Employment
- Independent living
- Community participation



Best Practices: Recommendations for Post-School

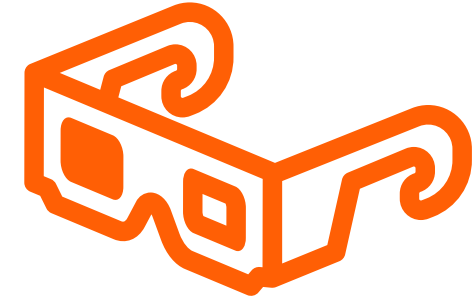
- ✓ Clearly connect to student needs
- ✓ Include specific accommodations or modifications
- ✓ Provide agency contacts or resources when possible



Student Perspective Section

Students provide input on the following, as it relates to employment, education, and/or training:

- Their goals
- Their strengths and needs
- The impact of their disability
- Supports that help them succeed, accommodations that work best



Students may complete this independently or with support.



Best Practices: Student Perspective

Encourage students to:

- ✓ Reflect on strengths and limitations
- ✓ Identify helpful accommodations
- ✓ Share goals and preferences



Post-School Data Collection Section

- Demographic information and consent for Indicator 14 Data Collection Survey
- Indicator 14: It is mandated that follow-up contacts be made with special education students one year after graduation, aging-out, or dropping out of school



Writing High-Quality SOPs

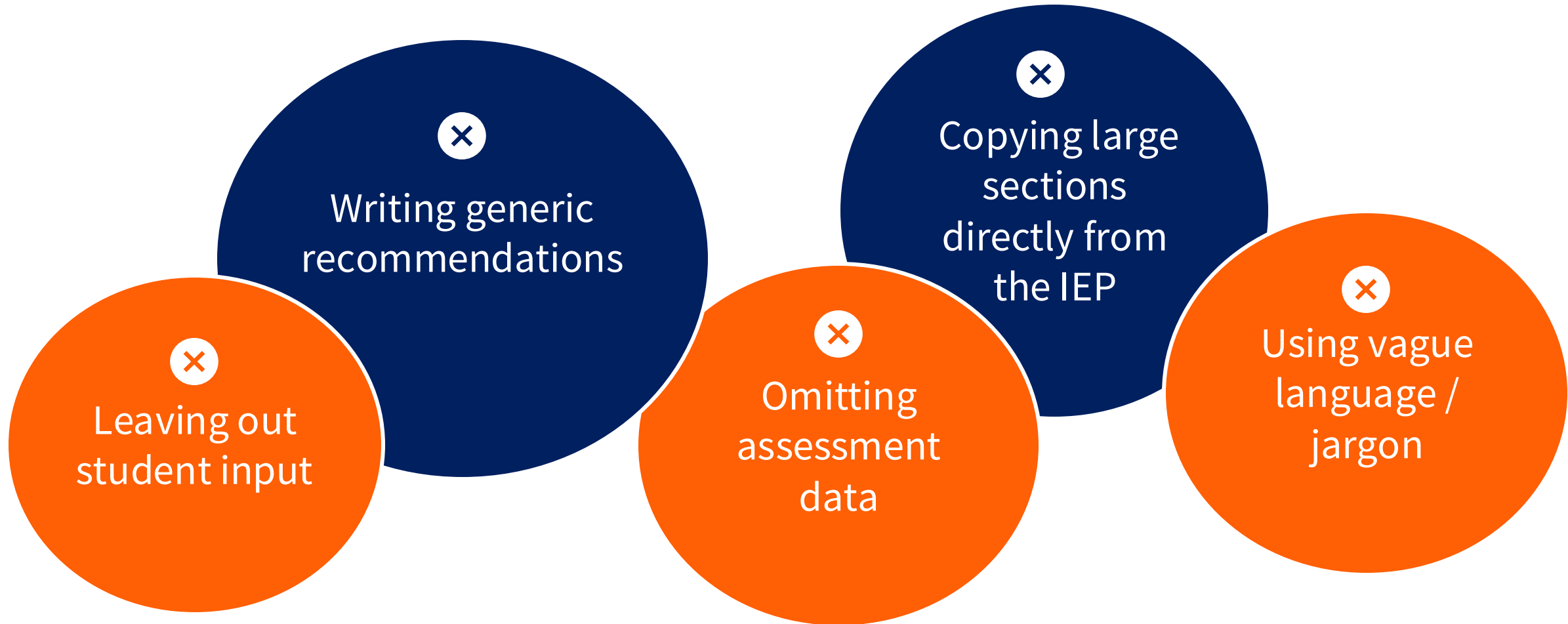
Characteristics of a Strong SOP

An effective SOP...

- ✓ Is clear and concise
- ✓ Includes recent data
- ✓ Reflects student voice
- ✓ Connects needs to recommendations
- ✓ Helps outside providers understand the student
- ✓ Makes the reader feel like they know the student



Common SOP Mistakes to Avoid



Practice and Application

Review Example SOP Excerpts

- What is done well?
- What could be improved?
- What information is missing?



Example 1: Academic Achievement

Maria struggles with reading and math due to her disability. She receives special education services and benefits from extra help.

- What is done well?
- What could be improved?
- What information is missing?



Example 1: Academic Achievement

Maria currently reads at a sixth-grade instructional level based on the district reading assessment (Spring 2026). She demonstrates strong comprehension of grade-level material when provided with audio supports. Maria experiences difficulty with decoding multisyllabic words and reading fluency due to her specific learning disability in reading. She benefits from text-to-speech technology, guided reading strategies, and extended time for reading assignments.



Example 2: Functional Performance

Jamal has trouble staying organized and sometimes struggles with behavior in class.

- What is done well?
- What could be improved?
- What information is missing?



Example 2: Functional Performance

Jamal demonstrates strong verbal communication skills and actively participates in classroom discussions. However, due to executive functioning challenges associated with ADHD, he has difficulty organizing assignments and managing deadlines. Teacher observations from Fall 2025 indicate Jamal often forgets to submit completed work. He benefits from the use of a digital planner, teacher check-ins, and breaking larger assignments into smaller steps.



Example 3: Recommendations

Student may need help in college and work settings.

- What is done well?
- What could be improved?
- What information is missing?



Example 3: Recommendations

In postsecondary education settings, Alex will benefit from extended time on exams (1.5x), access to lecture notes, and the use of speech-to-text software for written assignments due to written expression challenges. Alex is encouraged to contact the disability services office prior to the start of the semester to arrange these accommodations.



SOP Tips and Takeaways

SOP Completion Tips for Teams

- Stagger SOP development and meetings to avoid them piling up at the end of the year
- Collaborate with transition team members
- Gather current assessment data
- Involve the student and family in the process
- Review with the IEP team



Key Takeaways

- SOPs are required for students exiting IDEA services
- SOPs support successful transition to adult life
- Strong SOPs provide clear, actionable information
- Student voice and current data are essential





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