

Top Mistakes to Avoid at SEND Tribunal

1. Focusing on disagreements instead of needs

Tribunals decide cases based on needs and provision, not whether the local authority has behaved unfairly.

2. Being too brief about difficulties

Parents sometimes underplay difficulties. The tribunal needs to understand the real impact of your child's needs.

3. Not using examples

Statements like “they struggle at school” are less helpful than:

“They leave the classroom most lessons”

“They need adult support to start tasks”

4. Not preparing key points

It helps to bring:

A short list of the main points

Important page numbers in the evidence bundle

5. Feeling you must answer immediately

You can:

Take a moment to think

Ask for the question to be repeated

Ask the judge to clarify something

6. Trying to remember everything

Bring notes. The tribunal expects this.

7. Forgetting the tribunal panel is independent

The tribunal is separate from the local authority. Their role is to reach a fair decision based on the law and evidence.

8. Thinking your experience isn't evidence

Your experience of your child is important evidence. Parent testimony often helps the tribunal understand how needs affect daily life.