

LEARNING DISABILITIES



Definition

Learning disabilities are a group of varying disorders that have a negative impact on learning. Learning disabilities affect one's ability to speak, listen, think, read, write, spell, or compute. It is important to note that people with learning disabilities are of average or above-average intelligence but struggle to learn. Learning disabilities do not go away or disappear when a child leaves school; instead a learning disability is a lifelong disorder. There are several types of learning disorders:

<u>Disability</u>	<u>Area of Difficulty</u>	<u>Symptoms include trouble with</u>
Dyslexia	Processing language	Reading, writing, spelling
Dyscalculia	Math skills	Computation, remembering math facts, concepts of time/money
Dysgraphia	Written expression	Handwriting, spelling, composition
Dyspraxia	Fine motor skills	Coordination, manual dexterity
Auditory Processing Disorder	Interpreting auditory info	Language development, reading
Visual Processing Disorder	Interpreting visual info	Reading, writing, math

Characteristics

Typical characteristics of students with learning disabilities include, but are not limited to:

Reading

- Confusion of similar words, difficulty using phonics, problems reading multi-syllable words
- Slow reading rate and/or difficulty adjusting reading speed to the reading task
- Problems comprehending and retaining material read, but not necessarily with material presented orally

Writing

- Difficulty with vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Minimal planning, effort, and strategy use
- Reverses letters, eye-hand coordination problems

Mathematics

- Difficulties in memorizing number facts and solving word problems
- Difficulties with time concepts (before, after, tomorrow, yesterday)
- Struggles in solving multi-step problems

Socialization, Attention, and Behavior

- May have low social status, few positive interactions at school, difficulty making friends, and
 - appears lonely
- May not follow social rules of conversation
- Poor memory, short attention span, difficulty attending to task, and
 - difficulty following directions

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Working with Children/Youth with Learning Disabilities

Providing children/youth with learning disabilities the opportunity to be successful is not difficult. Some very common sense accommodations can be made that allow the individual to be successful. These accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Show rather than explain (modeling how the child/youth is to do something will benefit ALL children/youth)
- Supplement with more intact senses (use visual cues, signals, handouts, manipulatives, pictures)
- Reduce or space directions, give cues such as “ready?”
- Reword or help decipher confusing oral and/or written directions
- Teach abstract vocabulary, word roots, synonyms/antonyms
- Ask specific questions as you teach to find out if child/youth understands
- Have the child/youth constantly verbalize concepts, vocabulary words, rules, etc.
- Avoid asking the child/youth to listen and write at the same time
- Minimize transitions and give several verbal cues before transition
- Avoid assuming the child/youth will automatically generalize instructions
- Thoroughly prepare the child/youth in advance for anything that deviates from the normal schedule
- Allow children/youth to choose from a variety of activities
- Encourage children/youth to choose their own materials for a project
- Incorporate choices into activities
- Have the child/youth take step-by-step approaches to tasks; rely on visual organizational aids
- Teach children/youth to use tools like time organizers, computers or watches with alarms
- Teach the child/youth to prepare visual schedules and review them frequently

Additional Resources:

There are numerous websites that provide valuable information related to Learning Disabilities.

- National Center for Learning Disabilities www.nclld.org
- LD Online www.ldonline.org
- Learning Disabilities Association of America www.lidaamerica.org
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities www.nichcy.org

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