

Fact Sheet

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)
250 City Centre, # 616, OTTAWA, ON K1R 6K7
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Some Common Signs of LD

Parents are often the first to notice that "something doesn't seem right." There may be a number of reasons why your child is having a hard time. But what you are seeing could also indicate a learning disability. It doesn't mean your child is "slow" or less intelligent than her peers. Her brain is simply wired differently for learning and she needs to adapt strategies that make the most of her abilities. The earliest possible intervention is critical to her success in school. Learn to recognize the signs of a potential learning disability. If you have observed several of these signs in your child, consider the possibility of a learning disability.

The following is a checklist of characteristics that may point to a learning disability. Most people will, from time to time, see one or more of these warning signs in their children. This is normal. If, however, you see several of these characteristics over a long period of time, consider the possibility of a learning disability.

Infancy

- Lack of, or excessive response to sounds or other stimulus
- Trouble following movements with eyes
- Unusual sleep patterns
- Delays in sitting, standing, walking
- Little or no vocalization
- Irritability
- Preschool
- Speaks later than most children
- Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right words,
- Pronunciation problems
- Difficulty making rhymes
- Trouble learning numbers, alphabet, days of the week, colors, shapes
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble interacting with peers
- Difficulty following directions or learning routines

- Difficulty with buttoning, zipping, and typing skills
- Difficulty controlling pencil, crayons, scissors
- Tendency to trip, or bump into things
- Trouble interacting with peers

Grades K-4

- Trouble learning the connection between letters and sounds
- Difficulty with reading and comprehension
- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors including letter reversals (b/d), inversion (m/w), transposition (felt/left), and substitutions (house/home)
- Transposes number sequences and confuses arithmetic signs (+, -, x, /, =)
- Trouble remembering facts

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- Takes a long time to learn new skills, relies heavily on memorization
- Unstable pencil grip, poor printing, writing
- Trouble learning about the concept of or telling time
- Poor coordination, unaware of physical surroundings, prone to accidents
- Difficulty cutting with scissors, coloring and printing inside lines
- Trouble tying laces, button clothes, or get dressed
- Difficulty playing with more than one child at a time, may prefer to play alone
- Difficulty remembering the names of things: the seasons, the months, streets, etc.
- Confuses basic words (run, eat, want)

Grades 5-8

- Reverses letter sequences (soiled/solid, left/felt)
- Slow to learn prefixes, suffixes, root words and other spelling strategies
- Avoids reading aloud
- Trouble with word problems
- Difficulty with handwriting
- Difficulty with keeping up with papers or assignments
- Difficulty with reading comprehension or math skills
- Difficulty with time management skill
- Slow or poor recall of facts

- Difficulty making friends
- Trouble understanding body language and facial expressions
- Trouble understanding oral discussions and expressing ideas and relating events in sequence
- Difficulty organizing his/her bedroom, notebook, papers, desk

High School Students/Adults

- Continues to spell incorrectly, frequently spells the same word differently in a single piece of writing, laborious handwriting
- Avoids reading and writing tasks
- Difficulty with putting thoughts on paper
- Trouble summarizing
- Trouble with open-ended questions on tests
- Weak memory skills
- Difficulty adapting skills from one setting to another
- Works slowly
- Difficulty grasping abstract concepts
- Either pays too little attention to details or focuses on them too much
- Misreads information/lacks logic, poor reasoning ability
- Vulnerable to peer pressure, often the 'scapegoat' in situations
- Difficulty organizing and/or concentrating on homework

It is never too early to seek help for your child, but waiting too long could be very harmful. If you see several of these signs over an extended period of time, consider the possibility of a learning disability. Knowing what a difference early help can make will help you lose your fear and take the next steps to getting help for yourself and your child!

Adapted with permission from the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities and Learning Disabilities Association of America

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What you should know about LDs

- Learning Disabilities (LDs) are specific neurological disorders that affect the brain's ability to store, process, retrieve or communicate information. They are invisible and lifelong.
- Manifested by significant weaknesses in listening, writing, speaking, reasoning, reading, mathematics, social skills and/or memory in a pattern of uneven abilities
- LDs can be compensated for through alternate ways of learning, accommodations and modifications.
- LDs can occur with other disorders (ADHD, etc) and may run in families
- LDs are NOT the same as mental retardation, autism, deafness, blindness, behavioral disorders or laziness.
- LDs are not the result of economic disadvantage, environmental factors or cultural differences.

LD Terminology

<i>Type of LDs</i>	<i>Area of Difficulty</i>	<i>Symptoms include trouble with:</i>	<i>Example:</i>
Dyslexia	Processing language	Reading, writing, and spelling	Letters and words may be written or pronounced inaccurately
Dyscalculia	Math skills and concepts	Computation, remembering math facts, concepts of time, money, grasping math concepts, etc	Difficulty learning to count by 2s, 3s, 4s
Dysgraphia	Written expression	Handwriting, spelling, expressing ideas on paper	Illegible handwriting, difficulty organizing ideas, getting thoughts on paper
Dyspraxia	Fine motor skills	Coordination, manual dexterity	Trouble with scissors, buttons, drawing, writing
Information Processing Disorders			
Auditory Processing Disorder	Interpreting auditory information	Language Development, reading	Difficulty anticipating how a speaker will end a sentence.
Visual Processing Disorder	Interpreting visual information	Reading, writing and math	Difficulty distinguishing letters like "h" and "n"
Other Related Disorders			
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Concentration and focus	Over-activity, distractibility and/or impulsivity	Can't sit still, loses interest quickly, is easily distracted, may daydream

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Myths and Facts about LDs

1. Myth: Learning disabilities (LDs) do not really exist.

Fact: LDs are real. Recent research indicates neurological differences in the brain structure and function for people who have learning disabilities.

2. Myth: Learning disabilities are all the same and/or easily understood.

Fact: Learning disabilities are complicated. The extent of their impact and the areas of learning they affect vary greatly from person to person; combine in any variety of ways; and vary depending on context.

Helping is not as complicated: people with LDs need to determine which modes of learning work well for them, and use these strengths to compensate for the areas affected by their LD.

3. Myth: Students with LDs cannot learn.

Fact: Students with LDs can be successful learners, at all levels and in any situation, by compensating for their weaknesses by using their strengths; by using alternative, individualized teaching and learning materials and methods; and by choosing tasks that suit themselves.

4. Myth: More boys than girls have learning disabilities.

Fact: Although four times as many boys as girls are identified as having LDs by schools, research studies suggest that many girls who are not identified also have the most common form of learning problem - difficulty with reading. Many girls' learning difficulties are neither identified nor treated - possibly because boys who are struggling are, in general, more disruptive in classes.

5. Myth: Students with LDs are just lazy.

Fact: Students with LDs generally have to spend more time to adequately complete school assignments. This extended effort can often lead to difficulties in completing assignments on time, maintaining course requirements such as tutorial reading and studying. These difficulties should not be misinterpreted as 'laziness'.

6. Myth: Students diagnosed with LDs at school age should have outgrown them by adulthood.

Fact: LDs are a lifelong condition. If the diagnosis of a learning disability in childhood is accurate, the disability will endure into adulthood. Specific learning

strategies and adjustments can be developed to address problems, and can make it so that LDs are not a pressing issue, but the learning disability itself remains.

7. Myth: Learning disabilities are a school issue.

Fact: LDs affect one or more modes of learning, anywhere that mode is used. LDs tend to be noticed most often when they impact on school-learning, but exist in all areas of life - work, family, relationships, etc.

8. Myth: Accommodating the needs of students with LDs in schools is too difficult, time consuming and expensive.

Fact: Accommodations implemented for students with LDs are also generally good examples of universal learning strategies. They can improve teaching and learning, not just for students with LDs, but also for the overall student population and other minority groups, such as people from a non-English speaking background. Teachers can also benefit from this approach by developing a range of flexible teaching and learning strategies that can be implemented in a number of different environments.

9. Myth: Providing academic adjustments such as accommodations and individualized teaching gives students with LDs an unfair advantage over other students.

Fact: Academic adjustments are determined on identified deficit's resulting from a student's LDs. Adjustments ensure equal and fair participation in a learning environment and ensure actual learning is recognized. Students with LDs are required to meet the same academic standards as their peers.

10. Myth: LDs can be cured.

Fact: There have been occasional claims by individuals of "curing" learning disabilities in various ways. Learning disabilities are a life-long condition; many people learn to successfully use accommodations and strategies with their LDs to such an extent that it is no longer an issue for them, and certain intensive study methods do help some people, but there is no researched evidence that one person's solution will work for all.