

FACT SHEET



WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SIGNS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

It is estimated that 10 to 15% of Canadians have learning disabilities. Because of the very nature of the disability and because most children spend at least ten years of their lives in school, the most frequently noted signs are related to school performance. However, it is important to remember that the disability is not confined to school hours and may be identified during the preschool years.

In most cases, parents rarely realize that anything is amiss until the child enters school. In the case of children with more severe learning disabilities, the parents may have suspected for some time that something was different about this child. If parents, teachers, and other professionals discover a child's learning disability early and provide the right kind of help, it can give the child a chance to develop skills needed to lead a successful and productive life. A recent US National Institutes of Health study showed that 67% of young students who were at risk for reading difficulties became average or above average readers after receiving help in the early grades. All children exhibit some of the following behaviours at times.

The presence of one or two of these signs may not be significant, but a cluster of these behaviours requires further assessment.

IN INFANCY	GRADES K-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trouble with nursing, sucking or digesting• Resistance to cuddling and body contact• Lack of, or excessive response to sounds or other stimulus• Trouble following movements with eyes• Unusual sleep patterns• Delays in sitting, standing, walking• Absence of creeping and crawling• Little or no vocalization• Irritability <p>PRESCHOOL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaks later than most children and has immature speech patterns• Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right words, pronunciation problems• Difficulty rhyming words• Trouble learning numbers, alphabet, days of the week, colors, shapes• Extremely restless and easily distracted• Trouble interacting with peers• Difficulty following directions or routines• Difficulty with dressing• Fine motor skills slow to develop• Exaggerated response to excitement or frustration• Tendency to trip, or bump into things• Cannot skip, has trouble bouncing and catching a ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow to learn the connection between letters and sounds• Confuses basic words (run, eat, want)• 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, /, =)• Slow to remember facts• Slow to learn new skills, relies heavily on memorization• Impulsive, difficulty planning• 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• Cannot tie laces, button clothes, or get dressed• Reads but does not comprehend• 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.• Does not understand the difference between 'up and down'; 'top and bottom'; 'in and out'; 'front of and behind'; etc.

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
- Awkward, fist-like, or tight pencil grip
- Avoids writing compositions
- Slow or poor recall of facts
- Difficulty making friends
- Trouble understanding body language and facial expressions
- Difficulty expressing ideas and relating events in sequence

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- 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 adjusting to new settings

- Works slowly
- Poor grasp of 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
- Rarely relates past events or experiences in sequence or detail

ADULTS

- Excellent verbal ability, but cannot express thoughts on paper
- Mechanical aptitude, but difficulty with reading, writing or spelling
- Lacks social skills and has difficulty maintaining relationships or making friends
- Learns well when shown, but cannot follow written and/or verbal instructions
- Feels constantly anxious, tense, depressed and has a very poor self-concept
- Has difficulty organizing belongings, time, activities, or responsibilities

WHAT IF I SEE THE SIGNS OF A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Collect information about your child's performance. Meet with your child's teachers, tutors, and school support personnel to understand performance levels, and attitudes toward school. Observe your child's ability to study, complete homework and finish tasks that you assign at home.

Have your child evaluated

Ask school authorities to provide a comprehensive educational evaluation including assessment tests. Tests for learning disabilities are referred to as assessment tests because they evaluate and measure areas of strengths and areas of need. A comprehensive evaluation, however, includes a variety of procedures in addition to the assessment tests, such as interviews, direct observation, reviews of your child's educational and medical history, and conferences with professionals who work with your child. Either you or the school can request this evaluation, but it is given only with written permission. Since you are one of the best observers of your child's development, it is important that you be an active participant in the evaluation process. If you don't understand the test results, ask **questions!**

Know Your Rights!

Parents need to know how and where to get appropriate information. Learn about your special education program and services, your rights and responsibilities as a parent of a child with special needs by requesting a summary of legal rights and services from your child's school, district/board.

Learning Disabilities Association of PEI
40 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown PE C1E 1E6
Phone: 894-5032 Email: ldapei@hotmail.com