

Tip Sheet 2

Library Accessibility: What You Need to Know:

Learning Differences

Overview

One in seven Americans has some type of learning difference, sometimes called Learning Disabilities, according to the National Institutes of Health. Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are most common. Reading problems are also reported in as many as 80% of students with learning disabilities.

This family of issues is neurological in origin, and affects the processing of information, not cognitive functioning. Common learning differences include:

- **Dyslexia**, a language-based disability that causes difficulty in understanding written words,
- **Dysgraphia**, interferes with writing,
- **Dyscalculia**, interferes with calculating mathematical functions,
- **Auditory and visual processing disorders**, sensory disabilities that cause difficulty in understanding language, despite normal hearing and vision, and
- **Nonverbal learning disabilities**, disorder that originates in the right hemisphere of the brain, causing problems with visual-spatial, intuitive, organizational, evaluative, and holistic processing functions.

Tips

- Offer multisensory kits and resources in alternate formats.
- Offer patrons the option to sit at the front during activities.
- Offer personal FM listening systems during presentations.
- Allow time to process the information that you are presenting. Count to 7 before expecting a response to ensure adequate time.
- Be precise in word choice. Reword statements rather than repeating.
- Do not speak quickly, use clear articulation.
- Remember that mistakes can lead to new solutions.
- Have pencil and paper available for taking notes.
- Simultaneously combine verbal and visual information (show as well as tell).
- Respect the patron's strengths, weaknesses, and preferred method of reading.
- Ask a child about a favorite book rather than age to determine reading level.
- Children with LD may have behavioral problems, try to accommodate different behavioral issues and activity levels.
- Support children for their effort and successes!

Assistive Physical Items

- Electronic spellers and dictionaries
- Word processors

- Talking calculators
- Books on tape and portable cassette players
- Large print books
- Personal FM listening systems
- *Misspeller's Dictionary* or computerized spell checker
- Videotapes, DVDs, captioned TV programs, or computer software

Resources

Learning Disabilities Association of America

<http://www.ldaamerica.org>

412.341.1515

National Center for Learning Disabilities

<http://nclld.org>

212.545.7510

LD Online

<http://www.ldonline.org>

This Tipsheet is one in a series developed by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, a division of the American Library Association. See: www.ascla.ala.org.