

# Learning Differences

## Overview

According to the National Institutes of Health, one in seven Americans has some type of learning difference (sometimes called learning disabilities). Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are most common. Reading problems are also reported in as many as 80 percent of students with learning disabilities. This family of issues is neurological in origin and affects the processing of information, and not cognitive functioning. Common learning differences follow:

- **Dyslexia**, a language-based disability that causes difficulty in understanding written words.
- **Dysgraphia**, which interferes with writing.
- **Dyscalculia**, which interferes with calculating mathematical functions.
- **Auditory and visual processing disorders**, sensory disabilities that cause difficulty in understanding language, despite normal hearing and vision.
- **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 seven before expecting a response to ensure adequate time for processing.
- Be precise in word choice. Reword statements rather than repeating them.
- Do not speak quickly, and 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 learning differences may have behavioral problems; try to accommodate different behavioral issues and activity levels.

# Assistive Technology

- Electronic spellers and dictionaries
- Word processors
- Text-to-speech and speech-to-text programs
- *Misspeller's Dictionary* or an automated spell-checker
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)
- Talking calculators
- Audiobooks and players
- Large-print books
- Personal FM listening systems
- Videotapes, DVDs, captioned TV programs, or computer software

## Resources

- [LD Online](#) is a site used by caregivers of children with an LD, professionals and persons who have an LD. It contains useful articles, multimedia, monthly columns by noted experts, first person essays, children's writing and artwork, a comprehensive resource guide, very active forums, and a Yellow Pages referral directory of professionals, schools, and products.
- [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#) is an advocacy group for people with learning disabilities, their parents, teachers and other professionals. At the national, state and local levels, LDA provides cutting edge information on learning disabilities, practical solutions, and a comprehensive network of resources.
- [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#) is a group that advocates for persons with LD to succeed in school, work, and life.