The Learning Disabilities Adaptations and Accommodations Guide

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This document was designed and created by the
Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center

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Resource Center staff used several sources
in developing the conceptual and organizational framework
for the Learning Disabilities Adaptations and Accommodations Guide.

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Learning Disabilities Adaptations and Accommodations Guide

ProLiteracy Information Center
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Introduction

Using the Learning Disabilities (LD) Adaptations and Accommodations Guide

What it is:
♦ A collection of materials with a specific focus: helping teachers, tutors, and program managers understand and creatively use appropriate adaptations and accommodations to help adults with learning disabilities (or the characteristics of learning disabilities) to meet their individual learning needs and achieve their real-life goals

What it is not:
♦ A primary resource for understanding learning disabilities
  Training workshops based on the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Bridges to Practice* materials may be scheduled through the Resource Center. Teachers and tutors must understand the nature of learning disabilities and their impact on adults’ lives. This guide is a tool for those who have this background knowledge.

♦ A comprehensive collection
  The guide suggests a variety of inexpensive devices and tools as well as a number of instructional and life management strategies; but it is far from exhaustive. The Resource Center guide developers hope these materials will build awareness of possibilities and trigger creative thinking about accommodations. A short workshop featuring the guide and hands-on practice with some of the devices is described in the Professional Development Planning Guide.

What it includes:
♦ Brief background information on learning disabilities and accommodations
♦ Planning tools for staff and volunteers working collaboratively with adults with learning disabilities
♦ Information for adult learners on accommodations, legal rights and responsibilities
♦ A list of devices for teaching, learning, and daily living
♦ Suggested instructional strategies and tools

*Bridges to Practice: A Research-Based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults With Learning Disabilities, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, 1999.
Tools for Teaching, Learning, and Daily Living

Listed below are tools included in the Resource Center’s Learning Disabilities (LD) Adaptations and Accommodations Kit. Several of the specialized items are identified by brand or trade name.

Specialized Tools

- Magnetic Story Board
- Phonics Magnetic Kit
- Mini-clock (“teaching” clock with moveable hands)
- Spelling Ace Plus with Thesaurus
- Quicktionary Reading Pen
- Homework Wiz Plus
- Tutor (handheld audiotape recorder with speed control playback)
- Big Digit Desktop Calculator
- Desk Tapes (Times Table)
- Desk Tapes (Number Line)
- Grammar Guide
- Pencil with multiplication tables and gripper
- Pocket-sized common measurements conversion chart
- Colored Overlays
- Reading Helper (reading line marker with colored transparent window)
- Magnifying sheet/bookmark
- “A Different Way of Learning: The Employee with a Learning Disability” (video)
- “Project for Unique Learners in Literacy (PULL)” (book)

Everyday Items

- Dry erase board with markers
- Graph paper
- Fluorescent highlighters
- Timer
- 3” x 5” spiral notepad
- Pocket calendar
- Earplugs
- Books with cassette tapes (various titles; ex. Red Badge of Courage and The Call of the Wild)
- Audio taped popular books (various titles; ex. Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff)
- Audiotapes of instrumental music (ex. Watching the Night Fall)
Understanding Learning Disabilities

A Definition of Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences. (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994, p. 16)

Key Elements of the Definition

Learning disabilities:

• is a general term for a heterogeneous group of disorders

• are manifested by significant difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or math

• are part of a person’s makeup (they will not go away)

• are presumed to be a dysfunction of the central nervous system

• may occur across the life span

• may result in problems with behavior, social perceptions, and social interactions (but they are not the disability)

• are not the result of other disabilities such as loss of sight or hearing, nor are they the result of a lack of intelligence, or deficiencies in education

Adapted from Bridges to Practice Guidebook 1, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Washington, D.C. 1999
What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a common form of learning disability and a commonly misunderstood term. Dyslexia usually does not involve seeing or reading words backwards. Rather, it refers to problems in learning to read, write, and spell. The International Dyslexia Association has proposed the following definition:

“Dyslexia is one of several distinct learning disabilities. It is a specific language-based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single-word decoding, usually reflecting insufficient phonological processing. These difficulties in single-word decoding are often unexpected in relation to age and other cognitive and academic abilities; they are not the result of generalized developmental disability or sensory impairment. Dyslexia is manifest by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems in reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling.”

Key points to remember:

♦ Dyslexia is not

a problem related to intelligence or

a vision problem;

nor is the problem "outgrown."

♦ Characteristics of dyslexia include

deficits in phonological processing;

unexpected difficulties in single-word decoding (considering age and other cognitive abilities); and

conspicuous problems in reading, writing, and spelling.

♦ Many people with dyslexia can learn to read and write, given the appropriate supports.

♦ Individuals with dyslexia are not alike; each person may have different strengths, weaknesses, and instructional needs. Individuals with dyslexia may be highly successful with learning skills unrelated to language.

Adapted from Bridges to Practice Guidebook 1, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Washington, D.C. 1999
Understanding Accommodations

Accommodations for Adults with Learning Disabilities

• An accommodation is a different way to do a task. It uses a learner's strengths to work around the learner's areas of need.

• Accommodations are not cheating, but a way of making things fair. Remember that "fair is not equal". If a person has a spinal cord injury, it is not unfair for that person to use a wheelchair while others have to walk.

• Accommodations do not mean that others do the work. The adult does the work, but in a way that might be different from how others do it.

• An accommodation can be as simple as using one’s fingers in math or, with the help of assistive technology, as complex as using a voice-activated computer that types spoken language.

• The key is to match accommodations to the circumstances, to the learner’s needs and abilities, and to the specific learning disability.

• Sometimes accommodations are the only way to complete a task. When learning a skill is not the goal, or when learning that skill is too stressful or difficult, then consider accommodations. Accommodations then, are task- and not learning-oriented. Likewise, the use of technology is often task-oriented. Using that same technology to teach a skill is learning-oriented.

Adapted from Destination Literacy: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON 1999
Taking the Skills Route or the Bypass: Understanding the Difference

- **Adaptations/Accommodations for Task-oriented Goals:**
  Bypassing or Compensating for Difficulties

  **Goal:** Complete job applications to get a better job  
  **Accommodation:** Use the *Quicktionary Reading Pen* to identify unknown words on job applications

  **Goal:** Write customer orders for chef at restaurant (waiter)  
  **Accommodation:** Create card with shorthand spellings of “problem” menu items and share with chef

  **Goal:** Do handwritten cost estimates for carpentry work (self-employed carpenter)  
  **Accommodation:** Create form with common materials and costs preprinted (circle only), and improve skill with a calculator

- **Adaptations/Accommodations for Learning-oriented Goals:**
  Instructional/Remedial Strategies and Tools to Build Basic Skills and Knowledge

  **Goal:** Increase sight word vocabulary and reading fluency  
  **Adaptation/Accommodation:** Tape readings for home study and use as teacher/coach, replaying as needed while reading and rereading—to allow more independent reading practice

  **Goal:** Improve writing and/or spelling  
  **Adaptation/Accommodation:** Make word cards for “spelling demons” (commonly misspelled words); use foam letters to spell words as teacher sounds them out slowly; highlight problem word parts with a colored marker when studying

- **Where the Twain Shall Meet:**
  Learning and Task Achievement Go Hand in Hand

  Use of compensatory strategies and tools (chosen originally to bypass the problem) may eventually result in learning. For instance, repeated use of the Quicktionary Pen may teach new sight words, improve spelling, improve comprehension by increasing accuracy of word identification, or build vocabulary and fluency by allowing more independent reading.
Identifying Appropriate Accommodations

Checklist for Planning Adaptations/Accommodations

Decisions about adaptations and accommodations must be made on an individual basis, considering the learner’s strengths and specific needs, and most importantly his/her goals. Is the goal primarily to improve skills or is it to do something in life—at work, for instance? Is the need immediate, or does the learner have time to build the required skills and knowledge?

When considering one or more adaptations or accommodations for classroom use or daily-life tasks, you may rate and compare them using a checklist like the one below, which is adapted from a form found in *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education*, developed in 1998 by the University of Kansas Institute for Adult Studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner ________________________________</th>
<th>Date __________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Characteristic</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easily available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely to be effective with the learner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proven effective with the learner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensates for/bypasses difficulty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remediates difficulty/increases abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows more independent study/work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for a variety of tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved by GED Testing Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions to Consider When Planning Accommodations

Issues Related to the Individual:

1. What are the individual's job duties?
2. What job duties are problematic?
3. Exactly what does the person have trouble doing within the problematic area? (One must be very specific here.)
4. Examples of specific pinpointing of problems:  
   a. spelling problems?—(This may be an indicator of LD.)  
   b. visual or auditory deficits?  
   c. reading problems?—is it due to a visual or auditory discrimination difficulty?  
   d. memory deficits?—is this due to lack of attention, the inability to focus, the inability to screen out extraneous stimuli, or short-term/long-term memory deficits?
5. What are the neurological deficits? (One may have to do some educated guessing here.)
6. How can the deficit be compensated? (This is where an accommodation(s) will be considered.)

General Issues Related to the Workplace:

1. What is the physical layout of the workplace?
2. What specific equipment is utilized in the work setting?
3. What kind of lighting is used and what is the noise level in the workplace?
4. Is the workplace visually distracting, auditorially distracting?
5. How can the physical environment of the workplace be changed so that the worker will be able to perform his/her job duties?
6. Can the job duties be restructured so that the worker can perform the duties that are easier for him/her?
7. What assistive devices could be used that will help the individual perform his/her job duties?

Adapted from Work-site Accommodations to Consider for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Disorder, Job Accommodation Network, West Virginia University, http://www.jan.wvu.edu
Developing a Plan for Vocational Accommodations: TIPS

Technology (Identify Technology Concerns)
• What challenges does the disability create in working toward the vocational objective?
• Would technology assist the individual to overcome these challenges?
• Is technology being used currently? Can it be used or adapted for the vocational objective?
• Does the individual have any concerns about using technology?

Intervention (Individualize Technology Concerns)
• Is technology necessary for achievement of the vocational objective? Have technology needs been appropriately documented?
• Does the individual understand how the technology relates to the vocational goal?

Preparation (Prioritize Technology Concerns)
• In what order will technology concerns be addressed?
• Who should be involved in setting priorities?
• How much time will be needed to carry out technology goals?
• Does the individual need training or time to adjust to the use of technology?

Steps (Address Technology Concerns)
• Who should be involved in planning or providing needed technology?
• Who will fund the purchase of technology?
• Has the individual been involved? Does he/she understand his/her responsibilities?

Adapted from Tech Points: Integrating Rehabilitation Technology Into Vocational Rehabilitative Services, Center for Rehabilitation Technology Services
### Compensatory Strategies: Instructional and Vocational Rehabilitation for Adults with Learning Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If a person with a learning disability has this weakness...</th>
<th>Coupled with this strength...</th>
<th>Try this possible accommodation/adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perseverates: has trouble moving onto new tasks</td>
<td>Can follow strict time schedule</td>
<td>- Specify time limitation for each activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Have individual check off tasks completed and keep charts of tasks to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give feedback to student (e.g. if work is accurate, give extra credit for completion before specified time allotted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learns erratically (sometimes knows, sometimes does not know)</td>
<td>Short term memory is good</td>
<td>- Keep model of finished product near person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tape instructions from prior time periods, which are prerequisites to doing a given activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily distracted; cannot sustain attention on task</td>
<td>A) Functions well in a quiet environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) Works well when given short time periods to do a specific task</td>
<td>A) Locate person in a stimulus-free environment, possibly a carrel or small office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give person a time chart to complete with expected time to finish and his finish time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If possible, do one step of a task at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell person to focus on the speaker's eyes when listening to instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily frustrated; lacks self-confidence</td>
<td>Responds to positive reinforcement</td>
<td>- Assign short tasks and have self-rate quality of work and interest in individual types of task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsive to keeping track of work quality</td>
<td>- Have individual keep track of work productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give feedback on activity and an overview of progress to date from beginning of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Repeat work the person enjoys and can succeed in doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty following and/or staying on time</td>
<td>Tells time accurately</td>
<td>- Recommend that the individual wear a watch with an alarm or use a stopwatch to time tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give time limitations for tasks and monitor time at the onset of training and then progressively have individual monitor own time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use a timer to complete tasks within set time limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directionality confusion (left vs. right, north vs. south, etc.)</td>
<td>A) Communication skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) Copies visual model or demonstration well</td>
<td>A) Motivate person to ask questions when confused with directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Show model; then have person copy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use distinguishing feature on body or area as a landmark (e.g. if a person is confused by right and left, place an “R” in the upper right hand corner of desk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a person with a learning disability has this weakness...</td>
<td>Coupled with this strength...</td>
<td>Try this possible accommodation/adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Poor spatial judgment (interferes with focusing on key reading material) | Good finger dexterity | • Have individual use ruler as guide to hold place  
• Use highlighters to outline specific information to focus on  
• Use color transparency overlays that will reveal needed information while blocking background data |
| Impulsive; rushes through task making many errors | Responds well to clear, concise directions | • Emphasize intent of task, such as accuracy being more important than time |
| Cannot copy close work | Can copy blackboard work; can read written work | • Have individual copy blackboard notes  
• Duplicate teacher’s notes; carbon copy another student’s notes |
| Difficulty integrating parts of items into whole unit (finished product) | After visualizing a whole unit, can see how parts integrate into it | • Show person finished products, so he may see how parts integrate into a meaningful whole (e.g. show a person in electronics assembly a harness before he is given directions to make it himself) |
| Forgets information presented visually | Remembers information presented orally | • When possible, use tape recording and verbal instructions to relay information |
| Difficulty functioning when people or environment changes | Functions well in familiar environment | • Put individual in a highly structured and, if possible, familiar area where change and distractions would be at a minimum |
| Difficulty functioning in large open spaces with noisy backgrounds | Functions well in a quiet closed areas | • Have individual work in small quiet office or room  
• Wear earplugs or headphones |
| Difficulty reading directions | Listening comprehension and visual comprehension strong | • Tape or read written directions  
• Demonstrate work and have person model demonstration |
| Difficulty remembering basic math facts | Understands basic math concepts; has good finger dexterity | • Individual should use calculator when required to do basic math functions  
• Utilize “fact sheet” |
| Difficulty telling time | A) Can read digital watch  
B) Socializes well | A) Buy digital watch  
B) Pair up with an individual keeping a similar schedule |
| Lacks social judgment | Learns well in concrete situations | • Use group activities, like role-playing, to reinforce positive behavior  
• Whenever possible, give immediate gratification to reinforce positive behavior |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If a person with a learning disability has this weakness...</th>
<th>Coupled with this strength...</th>
<th>Try this possible accommodation/adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor visual memory</td>
<td>A) Good auditory memory</td>
<td>A) Explain written directions orally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) Functions well when model stays in sight</td>
<td>• Present information orally, not only visually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have person use talking calculator or spell corrector to check accuracy of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor auditory memory</td>
<td>Strong visual memory</td>
<td>B) When required to perform a task, have the model of the finished product available to the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Draw or write directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tape directions if visual presentation is unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Simplify oral directions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Learning Disabilities Association of America · 4156 Library Road · Pittsburgh, PA*
Accommodating Accommodations for Candidates Taking the GED Tests

Nonstandard editions of GED tests
- Audiocassette
- Braille
- Large print

What is allowed with approval?
- Extended time
- Private room
- Frequent breaks (supervised)
- Interpreter
- Scribe
- Calculator

What is not allowed
- Computers (in most classes)
- Readers (English version)
- Rulers/measuring devices

Accommodations not requiring approval
- Colored transparent overlays
- Clear transparent overlays and highlighter
- Temporary adhesive notes with spatial notes
- Earplugs
- Large print test
- Magnifying glass
- One test per day
- Straightedge

The process
- Requests must be made in writing on the correct forms, L-15 Form learning disabilities and AD/HD: SA001 Form for emotional or physical disabilities.
- Documentation from an appropriate certifying professional must be included with request (a certifying advocate may transpose relevant information on the form).
  - Diagnosis using either DSM-IV or HCFA numerical codes
  - A statement or test results attesting to the cognitive potential of the candidate requesting accommodations
  - A statement of how the disability currently, significantly, and negatively affects the candidate’s academic achievement
  - A statement of how the accommodations requested meet the needs of the identified disability

Bob MacGillivray, Adult Secondary Specialist/GED Administrator, VA Department of Education
Helping Adult Learners Understand Accommodations

What is a Disability?

A disability is a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more things you want and need to do. It can make it difficult to:

- Walk, see, hear, or breathe;
- Take care of yourself;
- Learn; or
- Work.

Adults with disabilities include but are not limited to persons with conditions, diseases, and infections, such as:

- Physical, sight, speech, and hearing impairments;
- Epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis;
- Cancer, heart disease, diabetes;
- Infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV);
- Mental retardation;
- Emotional illness; or
- Specific learning disabilities.

Persons with a history of such a condition or persons whom other people think of as having such a condition are also considered as people with disabilities.

What Are the Legal Rights of Adults with Disabilities?

**Program accessibility**: The program must:
- Provide a way for you to enroll as a learner if you are qualified to receive their services, and
- Have a way for people with physical disabilities to get into the buildings and classrooms.

**Nondiscrimination/equal opportunity** means that you must have an equal chance to participate and be successful. It means that no one can:
- Refuse to enroll you in the program because of your disability, or
- Provide you with different or separate opportunities than everyone else.

It does **not** mean that anyone will:
- Give you easier work,
- Change the rules to make it easier for you than others.

Adapted from University of Kansas Institute for Adult Studies (1998), *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning.
What is an Accommodation?

An **accommodation** is any change needed to help you learn the skill or do the work necessary for you to learn. It may mean:

- Using different kinds of learning materials;
- Using special equipment, such as a computer or a calculator;
- Having a special tutor or other qualified person to help you; or
- Using auxiliary aids and services.

An accommodation

- **Does not** include making changes in rules to make it easier for you than for others; and
- **Should not** create a hardship. You may not get the most expensive or “best” accommodation, just one that will help you do what needs to be done.

What are **Responsibilities** of Adults with Disabilities?

Be your own self-advocate. Self-advocacy means that you can explain your disability, suggest some accommodations, and find ways to help yourself.

Tell about your **disability** if you want accommodations.

Be prepared to provide **records** about your disability.

Tell what **accommodations** have worked for you.

Know that you have **legal rights**.

Ask for **accommodations** based on your need and the law.

What is an Accommodation?

An accommodation is a change that:

- Is required by law;
- Helps people with disabilities have a fair chance for success;
- Gives an equal chance to work in, learn in, and enter a building;
- Is chosen for the individual person’s need; and
- Is needed when you do similar tasks in other places.

An accommodation may include:

- Using special equipment;
- Doing work a different way;
- Doing work in a different place; or
- Changing how others think about disabilities.

Matching Adaptations/Accommodations to Learner Needs

A Framework for Teachers and Learners

On the following pages, general areas of difficulty for adults with learning disabilities are matched with possible adaptations and accommodations. *These charts are intended as springboards for creative thinking and planning, not as comprehensive lists.* Devising an effective accommodation strategy for an adult learner requires attention to that individual’s unique strengths and needs. Decisions require collaboration with the learner and creative problem solving.

The framework used in the charts and summarized below was devised by the Resource Center guide developers using the work of nationally recognized learning disabilities specialists. (See References for sources.) You may use this framework to structure the collaborative problem-solving process.

♦ **Adjust the Setting/Environment**
  Alter the environment or provide ways to screen out disrupting environmental stimuli.

♦ **Adapt the Task**
  Find ways to avoid/bypass the problem or devise strategies the adult can use to lessen the impact of the problem.

♦ **Adjust Instruction/Presentation of Information**
  Alter the way you present information to the adult (in a workplace setting) or adapt your instruction in response to individual needs and strengths (in the classroom).

♦ **Make Accommodations in Testing/Performance**
  Work around specific difficulties to devise a true measure of abilities. Do not allow disabilities to prevent an individual from showing what he/she can do. Allow an adult to respond and demonstrate competence on the job by using his/her strengths and abilities and, when possible, bypassing disabilities.

As you will see on the charts on the following pages, these four categories often overlap. Some approaches to accommodation are more suited to one kind of difficulty than to another, but using the framework may be helpful because it encourages teachers and learners to “cover all the bases” as they think creatively about accommodations.
Reading

Reading is a complex activity that requires the use and coordination of many skills simultaneously. Difficulty with any of these abilities may result in a reading problem. The lists below do not differentiate between different causes or types of reading problems. You should choose accommodations appropriate to individual learners’ specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities and/or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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### Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Allow learner to seek out different sources and intensities of light
- Allow privacy for reading aloud
- Provide a space with minimal distractions

### Tools
- Study carrel
- Portable screen
- Portable, adjustable desk lamp
- Earplugs

### Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- To reduce amount of reading, match learner with a peer for paired reading (taking turns)
- Allow a peer to read material to the learner before the learner reads it
- Use high interest/low level reading materials as a substitute for texts
- Make shorter assignments and/or allow more time for completion
- Rewrite difficult written material required for a job task, using simpler language
- Provide tape-recorded instructions, messages, materials (on the job)

### Personal Strategies
- Listen to books on tape or books on computer disk
- Use scan and read software and other technology (see tools)

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**ProLiteracy America Online Information Center**
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<tr>
<td>• Identify a friend, family member or coworker to help with needed reading</td>
<td>• Provide needed background information via videotape or speakers</td>
<td>• Use a variety of learning experiences: demonstrations, field trips, discussions, and group/cooperative projects</td>
<td>Tools</td>
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<td>• Books on tape from Reading for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFBandD) or Talking Books from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)</td>
<td>• Highlighters</td>
<td>• Colored overlays, line markers, magnifiers, Quicktionary Reading Pen or other tools</td>
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<td>• Variable-speech-control (VSC) tape recorders (used with books on tape)</td>
<td>• Manipulatives: letter or word cards, blocks, tiles, etc.</td>
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<td>• Books on computer disk with voice synthesizer</td>
<td>• Transparent colored overlays</td>
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<td>• Audio taped texts and other readings (made by teacher, aide, or volunteer)</td>
<td>• Line-marker card (homemade) or “Reading Ruler” with colored “window” to focus attention on line</td>
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<td>• Headphones for tape recorders</td>
<td>• Quicktionary Reading Pen</td>
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<td>• Simplified editions of literature classics, and/or simply written original books</td>
<td>• Talking dictionaries</td>
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<td>• Optical character recognition (OCR) with speech synthesis systems (stand-alone or PC-based) that scan and read text aloud</td>
<td>• Books on tape</td>
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<td>• Screen magnification/enlargement software</td>
<td>• Variable-speech-control (VSC) tape recorders (used with books on tape)</td>
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Adapting Instruction: A Potpourri of Strategies for Teaching Reading

Reading is a complex activity that requires the use and coordination of many skills simultaneously. Difficulty with any of these abilities may result in a reading problem. The lists below do not differentiate between different causes or types of reading problems. You should choose strategies that are appropriate to individual learners’ specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

**Strategies for Reading Instruction:**

**Discuss** the purpose of every reading activity.

**Teach** and provide practice with “authentic” reading tasks, using material from work or home and family.

**Focus** all reading activities on getting the meaning—on understanding, not just “word calling.”

**Teach** new words and sounds using multi-sensory strategies: the learner hears it, sees it, says it, traces it, and writes it.

*Examples:*

- Build words using cards, tiles, or cubes printed with letters, letter combinations, or syllables; then spell and read aloud before writing
- Have learner trace words with finger on sand paper, read aloud, and then write it
- Create raised letters by writing with white glue and ask learner to trace letters with finger, read aloud, then write while saying letters
- Have the learner practice new vocabulary words in his reading by writing and rewriting them, while saying the sounds

**Work** on building *phoneme awareness* (recognition of sounds within words) with listening exercises.

*Example:*

“Listen to these words. They all begin with the /b/ sound: bird, bank, and book. What sound do they begin with? Does this word begin with the /b/ sound? Bat, bake, baby, bowl, car.”

**Show** visually how sounds are blended to form words, by writing and sounding the letters one at a time, then “sliding them together” with a finger or pencil (or use letter tiles and slide them together).

**Teach** word patterns (at, bat, cat) and letter clusters rather than isolated letters and sounds.
**Teach** how to use context clues to identify and guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words. Demonstrate how you do this by thinking aloud. Then ask the learner to explain the context clues he/she uses.

**Use** reading material with pictures and predictable stories to teach the use of these clues. Then direct the learner to look for picture clues and make predictions when reading other kinds of materials.

**Suggest** that the learner visualize the scene or events described to improve comprehension. Model the strategy by “thinking aloud”—reading aloud and stopping to describe your own mental images.

**Make** an audiotape of the learner telling a personal story or experience, and then have the story transcribed to use as a reading text (a variation on the language experience approach).

**Teach** specific comprehension strategies and demonstrate how and when to use them. 

*Examples:*
- Underline or highlight important ideas or facts for later review
- Read titles and subheadings first and think about prior knowledge of the subject before reading
- Read the chapter summary before starting the chapter and/or read the end-of-chapter questions to identify important information to look for
- Write shorthand notes or symbols in text to identify definitions, respond to information, and note areas of confusion or questions

**Teach** the learner to notice and understand features of text, like titles, chapter summaries, subheadings, and other text organizers, such as questions followed by bulleted lists.

**Teach** the meaning of “signal” words—first, next, for example, therefore, in conclusion—and demonstrate (by thinking aloud) how such words provide clues for understanding.

**Encourage** the learner to read a paragraph once for a general sense of the content and then reread for details.

**Teach** the learner to break lengthy text into smaller chunks, stopping after two or three paragraphs and asking questions to check comprehension before reading further. Encourage rereading when necessary.
Writing

Writing is a complex activity that requires the use and coordination of many skills simultaneously: organizing thoughts, choosing/recalling words, forming letters, spacing letters and words, recalling correct spellings, remembering and using the rules of written language, and managing time when writing a lengthy piece. A learner who has difficulty in any of these areas may have a writing problem. The lists below do not differentiate between different causes or types of writing disabilities. You should choose accommodations appropriate to individual learners’ specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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### Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Provide a workspace with minimal distractions
- Allow learner to seek out different sources and intensities of light

### Tools
- Study carrel
- Portable screen
- Portable, adjustable desk lamp
- Earplugs
- Portable laptop desk, clipboard

### Personal Strategies
- Use electronic dictionary, spellchecker, or special software (see tools)
- Use computer word processor to eliminate handwriting problems and simplify the organization and editing process (see tools)

### Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Decrease the length of assignments or number of responses required
- Allow more time to complete writing tasks
- Assign group work with different roles for learners, so writing is not required of everyone
- Allow use of audiotape recorders or peer note-takers instead of making notes in class or training session

### Tools
- Handheld electronic dictionaries and spell checkers
- Audiotape recorders
- Allow marking
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<td>Word processor (desktop or laptop computer or portable stand-alone word processor) with spell-check and grammar-check capabilities</td>
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<td>Word prediction or word completion software programs (writer types first letters and software offers list of words to be entered with just a key stroke)</td>
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<td>Predictive word processors (offers a selection of likely words to follow what has been typed)</td>
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Tools

- Audiotape recorder
- Word processor
- Speech-to-text/voice input (speech recognition) software
- Handheld electronic dictionaries and spell checkers
- Audiotape recorders
- Personal “problem-word lists” (for easy reference)
- Erasable pens, felt-tip markers and plastic triangle grips for handwriting problems
- Lined paper or graph paper to encourage appropriate spacing
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<td>• Template-producing software (for forms and applications needed on the job)</td>
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Thinking about test accommodations:
Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.
Adapting Instruction: A Potpourri of Strategies for Teaching Writing

Writing is a complex activity that requires the use and coordination of many skills simultaneously: organizing thoughts, choosing/recalling words, forming letters, spacing letters and words, recalling correct spellings, remembering and using the rules of written language, and managing time when writing a lengthy piece. A learner who has difficulty in any of these areas may have a writing problem. The list below does not differentiate between different causes or types of writing disabilities. You should choose strategies appropriate to individual learners’ specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

**Strategies for Writing Instruction:**

- **Discuss** the purpose and rationale for each writing activity.
- **Teach** and provide practice with “authentic” writing tasks required on the job or at home.
- **Allow** learner to choose high-interest writing topics on which he/she has background knowledge. To build background knowledge and interest use discussion, video, and/or Internet research as a prelude to writing activities.
- **Teach** letter formation. Model printing by describing the strokes as you write the letters.
- **Teach** cursive writing if printing is difficult.
- **Teach** keyboarding skills.
- **Begin** with small writing tasks and allow plenty of time for completion.
- **Set** aside time for daily journal entries to provide writing practice.
- **Suggest** that the learner use a tape recorder to dictate what he/she wants to write, then play it back and write it down.
- **Teach** brainstorming and semantic-mapping techniques to get ideas on paper.
- **Teach** the writing process; use acronyms and other memory aids.
  - *Example:*
    - TOWER: Think, Organize (or Order), Write, Edit, Rewrite
**Teach** the steps in editing. Provide a cueing tool (chart or acronym) to guide the editing process.

*Example:*

COPS: Capitalization, Overall appearance, Punctuation, Spelling

(TOWER and COPS are adapted from Deshler, 1983 and cited in *Destination Literacy: Identifying and Teaching Adults With Learning Disabilities*, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada)

**Use** a structured, carefully sequenced approach to teaching grammar.

**Use** word cards or tiles in different colors representing different parts of speech for practice with sentence construction. Begin with simple subject-verb-object sentences, and then expand them by adding adjectives and adverbs.

**Teach** how to use dictionaries and thesauruses and provide practice opportunities.

**Teach** word analysis skills (root words, prefixes and suffixes) to improve spelling and build vocabulary.

**Use** a multi-sensory approach when teaching spelling skills.

*Example:* read aloud, copy, spell aloud, trace word, visualize word with eyes closed, say and write the word again

**Suggest** using a tape recorder to study spelling: read and spell a word onto tape, write the word, and replay the tape to check spelling.

**Use** colored markers to highlight key features of spelling words.

**Encourage** learner to develop a personal dictionary (on note cards or a small notebook) of words he uses frequently but misspells.
## Math

Math learning disabilities are varied and complex. Individuals may have language-processing problems, visual-spatial confusion, sequencing, attention, or memory deficits, any of which may cause serious difficulties in acquiring, retaining, and applying math skills and knowledge. The lists below do not differentiate between different causes or types of math disabilities. You should choose accommodations appropriate to individual learners’ specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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<td>Study carrel</td>
<td>Allow use of calculators and other computational tools (see tools) to solve word problems in class or on the job</td>
<td>Allow learner to work computation problems on graph paper or vertically lined paper to keep numbers properly aligned</td>
<td>Allow extra time for testing</td>
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<td>Portable screen</td>
<td>Allow extra time for tasks involving math</td>
<td>If learner confuses operation signs, enlarge the size of signs on practice problems or workplace documents</td>
<td>Allow calculator use and other computational tools (when testing problem-solving or subject matter other than math computation)</td>
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<td>Portable, adjustable desk lamp</td>
<td>Reduce the length of practice assignments (number of problems) to avoid overloading memory and attention span. Assign group work with roles for different learners so math is not required of everyone</td>
<td>Encourage use of a calculator to check accuracy of work or problem solving</td>
<td>Allow use of transparent colored overlays and/or page magnifiers</td>
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<td>Earplugs</td>
<td>Allow learner to seek out different sources and intensities of light</td>
<td>Encourage use of low-tech aids like lists of formulas, measurement equivalents, etc. (see tools)</td>
<td>Allow use of line markers to focus on correct line of print</td>
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<td>Allow privacy for reading and thinking aloud</td>
<td>Provide models of/practice with classroom and on-the-job tasks that require math</td>
<td>Allow marking of answers directly in test booklet (for standardized tests) to prevent tracking problems when moving from test to answer sheet</td>
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<td>Provide a space with minimal distractions</td>
<td>Personal Strategies</td>
<td>Allow use of computational aids for workplace performance</td>
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### Personal Strategies

- Use calculators and low-tech aids, such as pocket-sized multiplication tables, measurement equivalents, etc. (see tools)
- Identify a friend, family member or coworker to help with tasks involving math
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**Tools**

- Handheld calculators, including those with large print and large key pad
- Handheld talking calculators
- Pocket-sized addition and multiplication tables or lists of frequently used formulas
- Reference sheet of fraction-to-decimal conversions

**Tools**

- Desk/pocket-sized number line, addition and multiplication tables
- Reference sheet of fraction-to-decimal conversions
- Handheld calculators, including those with large print and large key pad
- Handheld talking calculators
- Pocket-sized addition and multiplication tables or lists of frequently used formulas
- Reference sheet of fraction-to-decimal conversions

**Thinking about test accommodations:**

Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.
Adapting Instruction: A Potpourri of Strategies for Teaching Math

Math learning disabilities are varied and complex. Individuals may have language-processing problems, visual-spatial confusion, sequencing, attention, or memory deficits, any of which may cause serious difficulties in acquiring, retaining, and applying math skills and knowledge. The lists below do not differentiate between different causes or types of math disabilities. You should choose accommodations appropriate to individual learners’ specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

Strategies for Math Instruction:

Provide extra processing time when teaching new skills.

Reduce the amount of information or number of problems on a page, to improve focus and minimize distractions.

Focus on understanding, not just memorizing.

Use practice problems that relate to learner’s real daily experience.

Use concrete examples and tangible objects when teaching abstract concepts.  
Example: abacus, blocks, models of geometric shapes

Teach the learner to use a calculator and encourage using it to check work.

Teach “math tricks” like using fingers for math computation.

Teach the learner to look for “clue” or “key” words in a word problem that signal mathematical operations. Provide a list of such terms and phrases.  
Example:  
- total, in all, altogether for addition
- difference between, left, how many more for subtraction

Teach a checklist of steps to follow in solving word problems.

Provide a real-world word problem as another version of the number problem when teaching a computation skill.

Encourage learner to read problems aloud and think aloud when solving them. It may also help to say numbers aloud while writing them. (Monitor frequently to identify flaws in thinking or errors in sequencing.)
Avoid confusion of concepts and applications by having the learner practice new learning separately. Clarify distinctions between one process or rule and another; then check for understanding.

Pre-teach and/or review the component skills within algorithms and strategies before introducing these complex processes.

Monitor learner's practice to be sure new skills are applied correctly.

Encourage drawings to help visualize math problems.

Use rhythm or songs to make rules memorable.

Try a computer-assisted instructional program for a highly structured and systematic approach providing immediate feedback for the learner.
Reasoning

Reasoning is defined here to include such abilities as understanding abstract concepts, grasping and following sequences, thinking logically, recognizing cause and effect relationships, distinguishing important information and ideas from minor details, recognizing common features of items for sorting and classifying, making reasonable generalizations, transferring knowledge and skills from one context to another, making decisions, and solving problems. Use the suggestions below, identified as related to difficulties in one or more of these areas, as appropriate for individual learners. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

Note: For reasoning problems related to reading, writing, or math, refer also to the appropriate sections.

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Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Allow privacy for reading and thinking aloud
- Provide a space with minimal distractions

Tools
- Earplugs
- Study carrel

Classroom/Workplace Strategies
In general:
- Build work teams to include a balance of strengths and minimize the impact of an individual with a disability

For sequencing problems:
- Break lengthy sequences into parts
- Provide cue sheets or prompts (schedule of events, list of jobs, steps in a process)
- Maintain regular schedules and routines in class or on the job

For abstract concepts:
- Use tangible objects (manipulatives like coins and blocks), stories, analogies, and real-life examples to illustrate concepts

Classroom/Workplace Strategies
For sequencing:
- Begin with short, two- or three-component sequences and/or break lengthy sequences into parts and gradually increase length and complexity
- Provide cue sheets or prompts (schedule of events, list of jobs, steps in a process, alphabet reference card)

Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Allow extra time for testing
- When testing reasoning and problem solving allow use of calculators and cue sheets to enable learner to focus effort on thinking
- Allow testing in private, free of distractions

Tools
- Calculator
- Cue sheets
- Highlighters
- Manipulatives
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*For problems with recognizing important information and classifying/sorting:*
- Highlight or color code written material to draw attention to critical features and show relationships

**Personal Strategies**
- Establish and learn routines for regular, everyday tasks so you can focus your attention on matters that require thought and planning
- Use a calculator or other technology, as appropriate to simplify some of the steps in a complicated process
- Work with a partner who has strengths where you have difficulty

**Tools**
- Cue sheets, e.g. steps in a process, math facts, formulas
- Calculator and other aids
- Daily schedule and/or to-do list

*For logical thinking and cause-effect reasoning:*
- Provide daily practice of these skills, using real-life questions and problems, e.g. *What would happen if...? Why do manufacturers/retailers raise prices? What happens when prices go up?*
- Model your thinking in answering these questions and ask learner to explain his/her answers
- Draw attention to examples of causes and effects, actions and consequences in the classroom or in the news

*Thinking about test accommodations:*
Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.
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For classifying and generalizing/ transferring:
- Provide practice sorting familiar, concrete items; then teach and model how to use this reasoning with other examples
- Ask learner to sort word cards into categories, e.g. same initial sounds, rhyming words, feeling verbs and action verbs, etc.
- Using different words each day, have learner brainstorm synonyms or words with similar meanings
- Provide practice applying new skills in different situations: using math with checkbooks, recipes, measuring for carpet, or applying for a loan
- Provide regular review of basic rules, math facts, formulas, and strategies that are to be applied in complex activities

**Tools**
- Highlighters
- Cue sheets, e.g. steps in a process, math facts, formulas
- Calculator and other aids
- Manipulatives
Receptive and Expressive Oral Language (Listening and Speaking)

Listening and speaking difficulties may result from a variety of problems, including hearing and speech impairment. This list focuses on learning disabilities/auditory-processing problems that affect oral communication abilities, i.e. receiving, understanding, and using spoken language. (Of course, individuals may have a learning disability as well as sensory impairment.) You should choose accommodations appropriate to individual learners' specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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Classroom/Workplace Strategies

For listening:
- When possible, seat learner with auditory problem near the speaker
- If possible, arrange seats in a circle or u-shape so each adult can be seen when speaking
- Reduce competing background noise
- Create a non-threatening environment, where learner feels comfortable asking questions

Tools

For listening:
- Study carrel (to reduce noise distractions)
- Earplugs

For speaking:
- Use multi-sensory strategies regularly
- Help learner to consciously use the multi-sensory approach and ask others to do the same
- Provide directions one or two steps at a time, putting them in writing and/or using visual aids and demonstrations
- Deliver information/provide directions in a consistent manner and format
- Be sure learner is maintaining eye contact with the speaker
- Teach listening skills: look at the speaker, take notes, ask clarifying questions, etc.

Personal Strategies

For listening:
- Learn listening skills and make it a habit to apply them: look at the speaker, take notes, ask clarifying questions, etc.
- Ask for important information in writing
- Use an audiotape recorder to capture lengthy instruction

Tools

For listening:
- Study carrel (to reduce noise distractions)
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**For speaking:**
- Use cue sheets when necessary for routine communications
- Use notes when you have time to prepare
- Use email instead of telephone for work communication

**Tools**

**For listening:**
- Audiocassette recorders
- Variable speech control tape recorder (allows playback at a slower speed)

**For speaking:**
- Cue sheets (e.g. a telephone call card with reminders of basic information to provide or suggestions for wording of questions to ask)

**For speaking:**
- Tell learner ahead of time what to listen for, and alert learner to important features of what is being said: "Here's the first key point"
- If learner has trouble discriminating and/or producing speech sounds, identify the sounds that cause problems, and provide individualized practice listening for, identifying, and producing these sounds
- Encourage learner to watch the lips of the speaker to help identify sounds

**For speaking:**
- Don’t require command performances; allow learner time to think before speaking
- Give notice when possible before calling on learner: “I know Mrs. Conway has had some experience with . . . we’d like to hear from her when we come back from break”
- Allow learner to speak without being interrupted or feeling rushed

**Thinking about test accommodations:**
Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.
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<td>• Make specific and limited requests to</td>
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<td>provide structure for learner: “Maybe you</td>
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<td>could first tell us why you went to the</td>
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<td>school”</td>
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<td>• Teach learner to plan, make notes, and</td>
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<td>rehearse when preparing for important</td>
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<td>• Variable speech control tape recorder</td>
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<td>(allows playback at a slower speed)</td>
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<td>• Video camera to tape lectures or</td>
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<td>discussions for later review at learner's</td>
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<td>learner can visualize progress</td>
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Attention

Attention problems can create problems across the board for the learner rather than causing problems in a specific area. There may be gaps in learning, because of missed lessons, tasks, or assigned work. Most learners have a favorite way of learning and maintaining attention, and when asked, can usually describe it. Choose strategies with the learner’s input. The goal is to “screen out” distracting stimuli and focus attention on the task at hand. A cross-section of styles usually benefits the learner. The ideas listed below may be helpful. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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<td>• Seat learner in area free of distractions</td>
<td>• Increase time allowed for completion of tasks</td>
<td>• Break assignments into segments of shorter tasks</td>
<td>• Minimize distractions</td>
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<td>• Use preferential seating</td>
<td>• Reduce the amount of work or length of work</td>
<td>• Use concrete examples of concepts before teaching abstract</td>
<td>• Permit movement or breaks</td>
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<td>• Allow the learner to select his/her seating</td>
<td>• Prioritize assignments or steps for completing work</td>
<td>• Relate information to the learner’s experiential base</td>
<td>• Allow more time to complete tasks</td>
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<td>• Help keep learner’s work area free of unnecessary materials</td>
<td>• Space short work periods with breaks or change of tasks</td>
<td>• Reduce the number of concepts presented at one time</td>
<td>Tools</td>
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<td>• Provide opportunities for movement</td>
<td>• Consistently follow a specific routine</td>
<td>• Provide an overview of the lesson before beginning</td>
<td>• Earplugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Study carrel</td>
<td>• Set time limits for specific task completion</td>
<td>• Provide consistent review of any lesson before introducing new information</td>
<td>• Study carrel</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Earplugs</td>
<td>• Alternate quiet and active tasks</td>
<td>• Monitor learner’s comprehension of language used in instruction</td>
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<td>• When possible, allow individual to choose high-interest materials and tasks</td>
<td>• Schedule frequent, short conferences with the learner to check for comprehension</td>
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<td>• Tools</td>
<td>• Highlight important concepts to be learned in text of material</td>
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- Require verbal responses to check on attention and comprehension
- Consistently follow routines
- Alternate quiet and active tasks
- Prioritize assignments or steps for completing work
- Give additional presentations varying the methods, using repetition, simpler explanations, more examples and modeling
- Provide written copy of oral directions and lectures
- Have learner work with a partner who will cue learner to stay on task

**Tools**
- Cassette recorders
- Computers
- Calculators
- Fact sheets
- Fidget objects
Organization and Study Skills

Many people with learning disabilities have difficulty with organizational tasks and are sometimes thought of as lazy or careless. They can really benefit from assistance with various aspects of organizing. Their problems may be evident in one or all of the following areas: poor time management, problems with task management, and/or difficulty organizing their personal space. Organization and study skills are intended to ultimately facilitate a person’s independence. These skills are taught and learned through practice. Allow opportunities for trial and error so learners can see which strategy works best for them. Remember to **work with their strengths** to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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**Classroom/Workplace Strategies**
- Seat learner in area free of distractions
- Use preferential seating
- Allow the learner to select his/her seating
- Help keep learner’s work area free of unnecessary materials
- Provide opportunities for movement
- Help learner develop an organized space (notes on one subject kept together, study supplies kept together, file folders for organizing, etc.)

**Tools**
- Study carrel
- Checklists
- Earplugs
- Fidget objects

**Personal Strategies**
- Use mnemonic devices (see “Memory” for examples)
- Use color code or visual cue to organize tasks
- Work on one subject at a time

**Tools**
- Checklists
- Assignment notebook
- Timer

**Thinking about test accommodations:** Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.
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<td></td>
<td>• Backpack, briefcase, or computer to keep track of materials and assignments</td>
<td>• Mapping</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>a. Read the paragraph or chapter</td>
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<td>b. Organize the main idea and supporting details as listed below:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Herringbone method</td>
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<td>a. Read the paragraph or chapter</td>
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<td>b. Write the main idea along the spine or main line</td>
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<td>c. Write answers to who, where, when, why, what, and how questions along the angled lines</td>
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<td>• 5-step study method</td>
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<td>a. Read – read material and read it more than once</td>
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<td>b. Cover – cover material with your hand</td>
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<td>c. Recite – say out loud what you have just read</td>
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<td>d. Write – write down important parts in your own words</td>
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<td>e. Check – uncover material and check against your written work</td>
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**Classroom/Workplace Strategies**

- Tape record lectures to review later
- Help learner develop the habit of reviewing notes before and after class
- Help learner plan and organize time to complete assigned work
- Have learner summarize notes in own words; use outlines, charts, or graphs
- Provide topics and types of questions that will appear on a test or exam
- Allow learner to use headphones or earplugs to shut out distractions
- Demonstrate or model how a task should be done

**Tools**

- Earplugs
- Fidget objects
- Tape recorder
Memory

Memory difficulties can create problems across the board for the learner rather than causing problems in a specific area. Gaps in learning result from problems storing and retrieving information. The learner may also have trouble remembering multiple or multi-step instructions and may repeat information without realizing it. Processing is most efficient when the best input methods and the learner’s strengths are utilized in the instructional and/or task method. The learner should understand how he/she learns or processes information best, in order to transfer information from short-term to long-term memory. Remember to **work with their strengths** to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Seat learner in area free of visual and auditory distractions
- Use preferential seating
- Allow the learner to select his/her seating
- Help keep learner’s work area free of unnecessary materials

Tools
- Study carrel
- Earplugs

Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Use mnemonics that relate to learner’s own experience/knowledge
  a. Acronyms – HOMES (The Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior)
  b. Acrostics – Very Active Cat (Three types of blood vessels in the human body are Veins, Arteries, and Capillaries.)
  c. Abbreviations – YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association)
  d. Rhythm and Songs – the “ABC” song or rule-based rhymes “i before e except after c”
  e. Poems – “Every perfect person owns just two hundred and six bones.”

Classroom/Workplace Strategies
- Break assignment into segments of shorter tasks
- Use concrete examples of concepts before teaching the abstract
- Relate information to the learner’s experiential base
- Reduce the number of concepts presented at one time
- Provide an overview of the lesson before beginning
- Provide consistent review of any lesson before introducing new information
- Schedule frequent, short conferences with the learner to check for comprehension
- Highlight important concepts to be learned in text of material
- Have learner restate concepts in his/her own words

Thinking about test accommodations:
Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.

Tools
- Cue cards (e.g. fraction conversion charts when not testing fractions, etc.)
- Earplugs
- Calculators
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- Read, repeat, review; read, repeat, review
- Have learner restate concepts in his/her own words
- Reduce length of the learning or study session
- Take study breaks every 50 minutes
- Activate all senses: gesturing, drawing pictures, talking aloud, explaining information to others
- Read it, listen to it, visualize it, write it, speak it, and manipulate it
- Highlight important concepts to be learned in written material

**Personal Strategies**
- Keep a to-do list
- Use Post-it™ notes hung in highly visible places as a reminder of “things to do”
- Record reminders on portable audiocassette tapes

**Tools**
- Cassette recorders
- Computers
- Fact sheets
- Notepads
- Highlighters

- Give additional presentations varying the methods using repetition, simpler explanations, more examples and modeling
- Provide written copy of oral directions and lectures

**Tools**
- Notepads
- Highlighters
- Cassette recorders
### Personal and Interpersonal

Some persons with learning disabilities face challenges in their day-to-day life besides the more familiar writing, reading, and math problems. Their challenges arise within the course of daily living and social interaction. Problematic tasks may include filling out a job application, telling time, managing personal information, scheduling and keeping appointments, playing cards or board games, and staying abreast of current news. The absence of common social skills may be another aspect of a learning disability. Social skill deficits may be due in part to low self-esteem but could also be a result of neurological impairments that affect social skills. Common signs of this social disability may include clumsiness, lack of eye contact, asking inappropriate or blunt questions and giving inappropriate responses, poor control of voice volume and tone, failure to take turns in conversation, and difficulty initiating conversation. The ideas listed below may be helpful. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities or develop abilities in weaker areas.

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<tr>
<td>Classroom/Workplace Strategies</td>
<td>Use calendar, to-do list, or electronic organizer to keep track of appointments, etc.</td>
<td>Role-play</td>
<td>Allow extra time for completing tasks and/or responding appropriately</td>
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<td>Find work that uses strengths but doesn’t tax social skills</td>
<td>Use concrete examples of concepts</td>
<td>Provide a relaxed environment</td>
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<td>Utilize feedback from trusted friends and mentors to monitor social interactions at work and in daily living</td>
<td>Relate information to learner’s experiential base</td>
<td>Reduce emphasis on competition and perfection</td>
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<td>Require verbal responses to indicate comprehension</td>
<td>Assign work tasks/roles that require minimal interaction with others</td>
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<td>Provide positive reinforcement</td>
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<td>Break tasks or assignments into small segments</td>
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<td>Provide immediate feedback within a positive framework</td>
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<td>Use peer tutors</td>
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<td>Encourage positive self-talk</td>
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<td>• Address significance of body language and facial expressions</td>
<td>• Show by example the amount of distance that is appropriate to be left between people</td>
<td>• Demonstrate how and when it is appropriate to interrupt</td>
<td>• Explain and model how to attend and respond to what someone is saying</td>
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<td>• Interactive CD-ROM to role play</td>
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References and Resources


Tech Points: Integrating Rehabilitation Technology into Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Center for Rehabilitation Technology Services.