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## LD Basics

### Common Signs of Learning Disabilities

Click [here](#) to download the "Taking the First Step" parent guide.\*

The good news about learning disabilities is that scientists are learning more every day. Their research provides hope and direction.

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 National Institutes of Health study showed that 67 percent of young students who were at risk for reading difficulties became average or above average readers after receiving help in the early grades.

Parents are often the first to notice that "something doesn't seem right." If you are aware of the common signs of learning disabilities, you will be able to recognize potential problems early. 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.

#### Preschool

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- Speaks later than most children
- Pronunciation problems
- Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right word
- 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
- Fine motor skills slow to develop

#### Grades K-4

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- 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*), inversions (*m/w*), transpositions (*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
- Trouble learning about time
- Poor coordination, unaware of physical surroundings, prone to accidents

## Grades 5-8

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- 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 assignments
- Slow or poor recall of facts
- Difficulty making friends
- Trouble understanding body language and facial expressions

## High School Students and Adults

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- Continues to spell incorrectly, frequently spells the same word differently in a single piece of writing
- Avoids reading and writing tasks
- 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

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## See also

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- **Speech and Language**
- **Early Identification**
- **What are Some Common Signs of Learning Disabilities** (4 min. audio) <sup>§</sup>

This information was developed by the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities, with funding from the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation.

\* To view this file, you'll need a copy of Acrobat Reader. Most computers already have it installed, or you can **download it** now.

§ To play this clip, you'll need a copy of the free RealOne Player. Most computers already have it installed, or you can **download it** now.

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<http://www.ldonline.org/ldbasics/signs?theme=print>

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