



Learning Differences in Children and Adolescents

Some kids learn in different ways than other kids. One type of learning difference is called a “learning disorder.”

What is a learning disorder?

A learning disorder means having trouble with learning in one or more areas, even if a child is smart or motivated. Here are some examples:

- Mixing up letters, words, or numbers after Grade 1 or 2 (for example, confusing “b” with “d”).
- Struggling with simple math.
- Having difficulty understanding or following instructions or staying organized.
- Skipping letters when writing words.
- Finding it hard to sound out letters.

How might my child act or behave?

- Children with learning disorders may feel frustrated and show it by acting out or seeming helpless. They might not want to participate in activities.
- Learning disorders can also be linked with emotional or behavioral disorders, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or anxiety.

How are learning disorders diagnosed?

- Your health care professional can check if there are any conditions that may be related to your child’s learning difficulties.
- Teachers can also assess your child’s learning and offer suggestions to improve their skills. If these steps don’t help, your child might benefit from a formal assessment.
- This assessment can be done through your child’s school, psychologists in private practice, or psychology departments at hospitals.

What supports are available for my child?

If your child is diagnosed with a learning disorder, their school can create an individualized education plan (IEP). This plan will describe your child’s strengths and needs, and may include “interventions,” “accommodations,” and possibly “modifications” to help with their learning.

- Interventions involve teaching your child skills to adapt their learning and advocate for themselves.
- Accommodations are things that help your child do better in school, such as study aids or technology.
- Modifications are changes to what your child is expected to learn.



How can I help my child’s learning?

- Encourage their curiosity. Wondering about the world helps keep their love for learning alive.
- Make learning enjoyable and creative. For example, you can use games, comic books, or audiobooks to make learning fun.
- Support your child’s passions and interests.
- Help them to join in activities like sports, hobbies, or music.
- Keep in touch with your child’s school.

Online Parent and Family Resources

eMentalHealth.ca

For parents and families of children with learning disorders:

<https://www.ementalhealth.ca/Canada/Learning-Disabilities/index.php?m=article&ID=16737>



Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)

<https://www.ldac-acta.ca/>

The “Learn More” section includes the Federal Disability Reference Guide and provincial resources to support legal education rights for your child, if needed: <https://www.ldac-acta.ca/ldac-lih-federal-and-provincial-resources/>

Dyslexia Canada

- Dyslexia (problems with letters, speech sounds, words, and reading): <https://www.dyslexiacanada.org/>

Psychology Today—Canada

- Dyscalculia (problems with numbers and math): <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/conditions/dyscalculia>
- Dysgraphia (problems with writing or spelling): <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/conditions/dysgraphia>

Canadian Paediatric Society.

How to help support your child’s self-esteem: https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/foster_self_esteem

