

Learning Disabilities

A learning disability is an invisible, permanent, lifelong condition, where a person of average or above average intelligence has trouble processing information in the central nervous system. It affects the collection, storage, understanding, organization, and use of information.

A learning disability is not:

- low intelligence or a mental handicap
- mental illness or emotional disturbance
- due to environmental disadvantages
- autism
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD or ADD)
 - (There are three traits to ADHD: inattention; hyperactivity; impulsivity. Although it seems like learners are not paying attention, the opposite is true; they are actually paying attention to everything around them and are unable to appropriately determine which items demand their attention.)

Myth	Reality
Learning disabled people have lower intelligence, are dumb, or retarded	Learning disabled people have average to above-average intelligence. There is a significant difference between their capacity and their functioning.
They are slow learners	Although they usually have difficulty leaning by conventional methods, special techniques or a different approach may be all they need.
Learning disabled people have a sensory impairment	Most have adequate sensory acuity. The problem occurs in perceiving and processing the information. In some case, LD students may also have a vision or hearing problem.
They are not university bound and should be directed to a vocation	Many LD students attend higher education with or without special assistance.
They are brain damaged.	There is not correlation between brain injury and learning disabilities.
Learning disabilities are caused by social situations or a breakdown of the family.	Although family and social problems do not cause LD's they can exacerbate the problem.
A learning disability can be outgrown.	A learning disability is a lifelong disorder. Students may learn to compensate for specific difficulty but will deal with it their entire life.

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Learning Disabilities: Tutoring Strategies

- ✓ Use Frontier College's SCIL method:
 - Learning is based on the needs of the learner, defined by the learner
 - Every person can learn no matter what the education system has labelled him or her and no matter what his or her particular circumstances are.
 - Learning begins with attention to the learner's strengths and successes rather than deficiencies and failures
- ✓ choose materials which are clearly printed
- ✓ try using visual aids
- ✓ try not to talk and write at the same time
- ✓ speak slowly and give one instruction at a time
- ✓ ensure the student fully understands any instructions
- ✓ provide lots of repetition and review
- ✓ ensure the student is attentive before giving instructions or help
- ✓ summarize key points
- ✓ allow time for the student to think about what is being learned
- ✓ give lots of feedback
- ✓ reduce distractions
- ✓ keep work area clear
- ✓ find a quiet area
- ✓ build in success
- ✓ provide immediate feedback
- ✓ organize notebooks
- ✓ ensure the student knows what to do
- ✓ allow pre-reading time to practise
- ✓ help the student set up an agenda

(Adapted from materials by Ruth MacDonald, Elliot Lake Secondary School, Elliot Lake ON)