

## Understanding learning difficulties

Your child may have problems with reading, writing, maths or paying attention in class. If this continues for a long time, it could mean they have a learning difficulty.

A learning difficulty can be caused by environmental or physical factors that affect your child's learning. This may include:

- long absences from school
- visual or hearing impairment
- behavioural or emotional issues
- learning English as a second language.

A learning difficulty can also be caused by a neurodevelopmental condition. This means your child's brain works in a different way, it can affect how they behave and/or process information. Some common examples of these are:

- dyslexia – a specific learning difficulty in reading
- dyscalculia – a specific learning difficulty in mathematics
- dysgraphia – a specific learning difficulty in writing, handwriting and/or spelling
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) – difficulty with attention, impulse control and concentration.

Dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia are sometimes called specific learning difficulties or learning disabilities.

### How can a learning difficulty can affect my child's education?

Your child can learn, achieve and reach their full potential with the right support.

Children with a learning difficulty caused by environmental or physical factors can reach age-appropriate levels when supported by quality teaching programs. The early identification of a learning difficulty, combined with the introduction of effective intervention and support, is essential to success.

Children with a learning disability or neurodevelopmental condition can learn ways to help reduce its impact.

### Reasonable adjustments

If your child has a learning difficulty, your child's teacher will work with you to make reasonable adjustments to support your child's participation. Reasonable adjustments are based on your child's learning difficulty.

### Difficulties with reading

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- setting practical rather than reading-based tasks
- allowing extra reading time
- small group work to build reading skills
- using assistive technology such as text to speech software.

### Difficulties with writing

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- allowing extra working time
- using a computer
- using assistive technology such as speech to text software
- providing an oral presentation instead of a written report.

If your child has difficulties due to underdeveloped motor skills, they benefit from seeing an occupational therapist for advice.

### Difficulties with mathematics

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- allowing extra working time
- using assistive technology
- using visual aids such as counters, diagrams and charts.

### Difficulties with attention and concentration

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- encouragement when paying attention and staying on a task
- developing signals to remind your child to refocus
- following a predictable procedure in class
- speaking slowly and providing classroom instructions in short and simple sentences
- using visual reminders to keep the task front of mind.

### Support and advice about learning difficulties

If your child has learning difficulties, there are support organisations and services to help you and your family. You can also talk to your school about other supports that may be available.

- Learning Difficulties Australia ([www.lidaustralia.org](http://www.lidaustralia.org)) - provides information, advice and advocacy services
- SPELD ([www.speldvic.org.au](http://www.speldvic.org.au)) – provides information, advice and advocacy services related to learning difficulties.

- Association for Children with a Disability ([www.acd.org.au](http://www.acd.org.au)) – helps families find support and advocacy services
- Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)) – general health and medical information
- Kidsmatter ([www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)) – provides information and resources on supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing
- Parents Victoria ([www.parentsvictoria.asn.au](http://www.parentsvictoria.asn.au)) - provides information and advice for parents
- Raising Children Network (<https://raisingchildren.net.au>) – provides information and advice for parents.

Reference: Victorian Department of Education and Training ([education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au))

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