

Learning Disabilities

What is a learning disability?

A learning disability:

- Is an area of weakness that hinders our ability to learn
- Causes a person to have difficulty with correctly receiving information, processing information, or responding to information
- Is caused by a neurological dysfunction in the brain
- Does not affect intelligence!
- You can read the official definition on the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta's website: <https://www.ldac-acta.ca/official-definition-of-learning-disabilities/>

How do I know if my learner has a learning disability?

People with learning disabilities commonly feel frustrated due to¹:

- Ability to excel in some areas while failing in one or more academic areas
- Necessity of spending excessive amounts of energy to understand something
- Ability to do a task one day but unable to do the same task the next day

They have average to superior intelligence that is offset by noticeable weaknesses. A person with a learning disability may have difficulties in¹:

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|---|---|
| ➤ Reading and writing | ➤ Memorizing |
| ➤ Keeping words in order when reading, spelling, or writing | ➤ Taking notes in class |
| ➤ Keeping numbers in order when doing math | ➤ Recalling information studied for tests |
| ➤ Keeping track of a class schedule | ➤ Remembering homework assignments, spelling, or vocabulary |
| ➤ Completing long-range assignments | ➤ Remembering basic math facts, phone numbers, addresses, locker combinations, people's names, appointments, etc. |
| ➤ Following directions | |
| ➤ Understanding what is heard or seen | |

Where can I get more information?

LDOnline	http://www.ldonline.org/
LDAA	Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta https://ldalberta.ca
LDAC	Learning Disabilities Association of Canada https://www.ldac-acta.ca/
NILD	National Institute for Learning Development Canada https://nildcanada.org/learning-disabilities/

What are the types of learning disabilities?

Most learning disabilities fall into three main categories:

Dyslexia¹	Dysgraphia¹	Dyscalculia¹
<p>Broad category of language deficits in the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hear and manipulate sounds ➤ Read and spell words accurately and fluently ➤ Develop vocabulary quickly 	<p>Refers to people who struggle with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Handwriting, spelling, and grammar ➤ Writing thoughts on paper ➤ Vocabulary retrieval ➤ Clarity of thought ➤ Memory 	<p>Refers to people who struggle with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Basic number sense ➤ Early number concepts ➤ Math calculations ➤ Math reasoning

NOTE: Many ESL Literacy learners struggle with these same tasks; therefore, it is important to determine if the struggles are apparent in the learners' first language or whether these struggles are due to literacy issues rather than a disability. See Tip Sheet #16 – Working With ESL Literacy Learners.

¹Information was retrieved from: National Institute for Learning Development Canada (NILD Canada) <https://nildcanada.org/learning-disabilities/>

What strategies can I use if my learner has a learning disability?

Assessing Learning Disabilities in ESL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Compilation of information drawn on three workshops attended in 2001 and 2002 ➤ Strategies are listed on pages 7-12 http://www.teslontario.net/uploads/research/ESLLDStrategies.pdf
The Double Challenge of ESL and Dyslexia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Webinar on Tutela, an online resource available to members only. Membership is free to all ESL professionals in Canada. https://tutela.ca/Resource_10768
Everyone Can Learn: Strategies for Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Blog about a workshop the writer attended on the topic https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/blog/english-language-learning/everyone-can-learn-strategies-teaching-adults-learning-disabilities
Links in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A manual linking second language learning, literacy, and learning disabilities ➤ Strategies are listed on pages 81–90 http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/linc/LnksLrn.pdf

NOTE: If the links won't open when you click on them, then copy and paste the link into your web browser.