

## 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 to<sup>1</sup>:

- 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 in<sup>1</sup>:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reading and writing</li> <li>➤ Keeping words in order when reading, spelling, or writing</li> <li>➤ Keeping numbers in order when doing math</li> <li>➤ Keeping track of a class schedule</li> <li>➤ Completing long-range assignments</li> <li>➤ Following directions</li> <li>➤ Understanding what is heard or seen</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Memorizing</li> <li>➤ Taking notes in class</li> <li>➤ Recalling information studied for tests</li> <li>➤ Remembering homework assignments, spelling, or vocabulary</li> <li>➤ Remembering basic math facts, phone numbers, addresses, locker combinations, people’s names, appointments, etc.</li> </ul> |
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### Where can I get more information?

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

## What are the types of learning disabilities?

Most learning disabilities fall into three main categories:

<b>Dyslexia<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Dysgraphia<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Dyscalculia<sup>1</sup></b>
<p>Broad category of language deficits in the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hear and manipulate sounds</li> <li>➤ Read and spell words accurately and fluently</li> <li>➤ Develop vocabulary quickly</li> </ul>	<p>Refers to people who struggle with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Handwriting, spelling, and grammar</li> <li>➤ Writing thoughts on paper</li> <li>➤ Vocabulary retrieval</li> <li>➤ Clarity of thought</li> <li>➤ Memory</li> </ul>	<p>Refers to people who struggle with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Basic number sense</li> <li>➤ Early number concepts</li> <li>➤ Math calculations</li> <li>➤ Math reasoning</li> </ul>

**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.

<sup>1</sup>Information 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?

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

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