

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)