



## The Challenges of Learning Disabilities

Edited by: Megan Wass

There are certain fundamental learning challenges which can arise from a learning disability. These include problems with attention, auditory processing, visual processing, memory, visual-spatial and temporal awareness, and psychomotor coordination. These broad categories of challenges can have specific effects on an individual's academic abilities. The various academic effects of learning disabilities may include difficulties with: reading, writing, listening and speaking, math, general knowledge, attention, memory, and organization/time management.

Below are a few examples of how difficulties within these different areas may manifest themselves:

### 1. Reading

- word reversals, confusion of similar words, difficulty applying phonics, problems reading multisyllable words
- slow or uneven reading, difficulty adjusting speed
- poor comprehension and retention of material
- incomplete or inaccurate reading of instructions, rules, dates, etc.

### 2. Writing

- problems with forming letters, spacing, capitals, and punctuation
- spelling errors, inconsistent spelling, letter reversal, word reversal
- difficulty with sequencing
- difficulty with sentence structure, poor grammar, omitted words
- difficulty copying from the board, overhead, or textbook

### 3. Listening and Speaking

- difficulty extracting meaning from oral language
- difficulty "reading" subtle messages in body language, facial expressions, tones of voice, sarcasm, and irony
- difficulty expressing ideas orally
- problems describing events or stories in proper sequence

### 4. Math

- difficulty memorizing basic facts
- confusion or reversal of numbers, sequences, or operational symbols
- difficulty copying problems, aligning columns
- difficulty reading or comprehending word problems
- problems with reasoning and abstract concepts



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## The Challenges of Learning Disability – continued

### 5. General Knowledge

- lack of basic foundations in any discipline
- lack of the background to understand common cultural references
- unawareness of these gaps in general knowledge, or reluctance to acknowledge them

### 6. Attention

- difficulty in turning attention to a task
- difficulty in maintaining attention
- difficulty attending to spoken language, inconsistent concentration
- difficulty in switching from one task to another

### 7. Memory

- difficulty remembering material presented through only one style of learning (only visual or auditory)
- need for extra work and time to store material in long-term memory
- short term memory may be limited in its abilities

### 8. Organization/Time Management

- frequent lateness, and disorganization
- apparent inattention – asking a question that was just answered
- slowness in getting things down, difficulty following instructions
- need for more time to complete assignments
- confusion in spatial orientation, getting lost easily, difficulty following directions

These are some of the possible challenges persons with learning disabilities may encounter in their academic career. The degree and kind of difficulty will vary from one person to another, as will the best approach to help that individual succeed in their academic goal. The information presented in this article, as well as further useful knowledge about learning disabilities, can be found in the Meighen Centre for Learning Assistance and Research training program guide: *Introducing Learning Disabilities to Postsecondary Educators*.

#### Reference:

Drover, Janes, McMillian, Brian, Owen, Lynne and Wilson, Alexander. "Introducing Learning Disabilities to Postsecondary Educators" *The Meighen Centre for Learning Assistance and Research*. Sackville NB: Mount Allison University. (1996): 29-31. Print.

## Inspirational Quotes – issue # 4

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Throughout history society has been influenced and shaped by the many great contributions made by individuals with learning disabilities. These people demonstrated the strength and perseverance to be true to themselves and strive for their full potential. The LD Edge would like to take the opportunity to introduce you to a few of these incredible people's stories and share their words of wisdom in a series called *Inspirational Quotes*. We hope their words will inspire and motivate you to reach for your true potential.

*"I almost flunked first grade and also the second, third, fourth, and fifth; but my younger brother was in the grade behind me, and he was a brain and nobody wanted to have me be in the same grade as him, so they kept passing me. I never learned how to spell, graduated from eighth grade counting on my fingers to do simple addition, and in general was not a resounding academic success. I did, however, all through elementary school, write poetry. Funny poems, silly poems, all sorts of poems".*

– Robert Munsch - children's author

Robert Munsch has written over 40 books and short stories since his first publication, *Mud Puddle*, in 1979. *Mud Puddle* sold 3000 copies the first year alone and went on to have its best selling year over 10 years later. He is a bestselling author in both the United States and Canada, and has sold over 30 million books, more than any other Canadian author. In 1999 Munsch was made a Member of the Order of Canada, and in September 2009 he received a star on the Canada's Walk of Fame in Toronto.

#### References:

"Robert Munsch Biography." *The Official Robert Munsch Website*. <http://www.robertmunsch.com/bio.cfm>. April 14, 2010.

"Robert Munsch" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. March 11, 2010. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Munsch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Munsch) Accessed April 14, 2010.

# Learning Strategies For Your Individual Learning Style

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Identifying your learning style can help open up many opportunities for an individual with a learning challenge. By understanding your strengths and the ways you interpret and use information you can greatly increase your chance of success in your learning endeavors.

Here are some more practical suggestions pertaining to each learning style provided by LD Pride.net:

## Visual Learners:

- use visual materials such as pictures, charts, maps, graphs, etc.
- have a clear view of your teachers when they are speaking so you can see their body language and facial expression
- use colour to highlight important points in text
- take notes or ask your teacher to provide handouts
- illustrate your ideas as a picture or brainstorming bubble before writing them down
- write a story and illustrate it
- use multi-media (e.g. computers, videos, and filmstrips)
- study in a quiet place away from verbal disturbances
- read illustrated books
- visualize information as a picture to aid memorization

## Auditory Learners:

- participate in class discussions/debates
- make speeches and presentations
- use a tape recorder during lectures instead of taking notes
- read text out aloud
- create musical jingles to aid memorization
- create mnemonics to aid memorization
- discuss your ideas verbally
- dictate to someone while they write down your thoughts
- use verbal analogies and story telling to demonstrate your point

## Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners

- take frequent study breaks
- move around to learn new things (e.g. read while on an exercise bike, mold a piece of clay to learn a new concept)
- work at a standing position
- chew gum while studying
- use bright colors to highlight reading material
- dress up your work space with posters
- if you wish, listen to music while you study
- skim through reading material to get a rough idea what it is about before settling down to read it in detail.

Reference: Bogod, L. (1998). *Learning Styles & Multiple Intelligence Making Your Learning Style Work for You*. Retrieved April 14, 2010, from LD Pride.net: <http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm>

## Speakers' Bureau Update...

Our **Speakers' Bureau** continues to offer presentations to community groups and employers. Each of our current speakers has a 30-40 minute presentation that he/she can bring to your workplace, meeting or event free of charge. Our speakers have their own unique presentation that shares their personal experience of living and succeeding with a Learning Disability.

To book your presentation, please call us at

519 - 433-7950 ext 372.

ATN Access Inc. would like to thank the London Community Foundation for their generous support of our Speakers' Bureau Initiative.



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We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.

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If we give them an edge...  
They may give us one!