

# Early Warning Signs of Learning Disabilities

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Becoming aware of the warning signs of learning disabilities and getting children the necessary help early on can be key to a child's future.

Learning disabilities affect one in seven people according to the National Institutes of Health. Parents, therefore, need to be familiar with the early indicators of a learning disability in order to get the right help as soon as possible. The earlier a learning disability is detected, the better chance a child will have of succeeding in school and in life. Parents are encouraged to understand the warning signs of a learning disability from as early as pre-school. The first years in school are especially crucial for a young child.



The most common learning disability is difficulty with language and reading. A recent National Institutes of Health study showed that 67 percent of young students identified as being at risk for reading difficulties were able to achieve average or above average reading ability when they received help early. President Clinton recently issued a challenge to America to educate all children to be reading and reading well by the fourth grade. Being aware of the warning signs and getting children the earliest possible help will increase the chance of meeting this goal, and will greatly improve the chances of those with learning disabilities for greater academic achievement and self esteem.

Many children and adults with learning disabilities remain undiagnosed and go through life with this "hidden handicap." The resulting problems can lead to poor self esteem, failure to thrive in school, and difficulty in the workplace. With early detection and intervention, parents can give their children the necessary skills for coping with and compensating for the learning disability, an opportunity that was denied to many of today's adults.

All children learn in highly individual ways. Children with learning disabilities simply process information differently, but they are generally of normal or above-average intelligence. Having a learning disability can affect a child's ability to read, write, speak, do math, and build social relationships.

Below are several early warning signs commonly associated with learning disabilities between the preschool years and fourth grade. Many young children may exhibit one or two of these behaviors; however, consistent problems with a group of behaviors is a good indication your child may have a learning disability.

## Early Warning Signs: Preschool - 4th Grade

Preschool	Grades K-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Late talking, compared to other children.</li> <li>▶ Pronunciation problems.</li> <li>▶ Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right word.</li> <li>▶ Difficulty rhyming words.</li> <li>▶ Trouble learning numbers, the alphabet, days of the week.</li> <li>▶ Extremely restless and easily distracted.</li> <li>▶ Trouble interacting with peers.</li> <li>▶ Poor ability to follow directions or routines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Slow to learn the connection between letters and sounds.</li> <li>▶ Confuses basic words (run, eat, want).</li> <li>▶ Makes consistent reading and spelling errors including letter reversals (b/d), inversions (m/w), transpositions (felt/left), and substitutions (house/home).</li> <li>▶ Transposes number sequences and confuses arithmetic signs (+, -, x, /, =).</li> <li>▶ Slow recall of facts.</li> <li>▶ Slow to learn new skills, relies heavily on memorization.</li> <li>▶ Impulsiveness, lack of planning.</li> <li>▶ Unstable pencil grip.</li> <li>▶ Trouble learning about time.</li> <li>▶ Poor coordination, unaware of physical surroundings, prone to accidents.</li> </ul>

### Common Learning Disabilities Include:

**Dyslexia** - a language-based disability in which a person has trouble understanding words, sentences, or paragraphs.

**Dyscalculia** - a mathematical disability in which a person has a very difficult time solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts.

**Dysgraphia** - a writing disability in which a person finds it hard to form letters correctly or write within a defined space.

**Auditory and Visual Processing Disabilities** - a sensory disability in which a person has difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision.

The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities, a project of the Communications Consortium Media Center, is a collaborative public awareness effort of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, the Learning Disabilities Association of America, The Orton Dyslexia Society, the Division for Learning Disabilities at the Council for Exceptional Children, the Council for Learning Disabilities, and the Schwab Foundation for Learning.

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Visit the **LD OnLine** web site at <http://www.ldonline.org>  
for important resources and information about learning disabilities