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Learning Disabilities

Also called: Learning differences, Learning disorders

What is a learning disability?

Learning disabilities are conditions that affect the ability to learn. They can cause problems with:

- Understanding what people are saying
- Speaking [<https://medlineplus.gov/speechandlanguageproblemsinchildren.html>]
- Reading
- Writing
- Doing math
- Paying attention

Often, children have more than one kind of learning disability. They may also have another condition, such as **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder** [<https://medlineplus.gov/attentiondeficithyperactivitydisorder.html>] (ADHD). This can make learning even more of a challenge. The sooner a learning disability is identified and addressed, the better a child is likely to perform in school.

What causes learning disabilities?

Learning disabilities don't have anything to do with how smart your child is. They are caused by differences in the brain, and they affect the way the brain takes in and uses information. These differences are usually present at birth. But there are certain factors that can play a role in the development of a learning disability, including:

- Genetics
- Environmental exposures, such as lead [<https://medlineplus.gov/leadpoisoning.html>]
- Using substances while pregnant [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancyandsubstanceuse.html>]

How are learning disabilities diagnosed?

The earlier you can find and treat a learning disability, the better. Unfortunately, learning disabilities are usually not found until a child is in school. If you notice that your child is struggling, talk to your child's teacher or health care provider about having your child evaluated for a learning disability. The evaluation may include:

- Doing a physical exam to check for a medical problem that might make learning more difficult.
- Asking about your family history.
- Test your child's intellectual and school performance.

What are the treatments for learning disabilities?




The most common treatment for learning disabilities is special education. A teacher or other learning specialist can help your child learn skills by building on their strengths and finding ways to make up for their weaknesses. They may suggest ways you can help your child when they do homework. Instructors may try special teaching methods, make changes to the classroom, or use technologies that can assist your child's learning needs. Some children also get help from tutors or speech or language therapists.

A child with a learning disability may struggle with low self-esteem, frustration, and other problems. Mental health professionals can help your child understand these feelings, develop coping tools, and build healthy relationships.


If your child has another condition, such as ADHD, they will need treatment for that condition as well.

NIH: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development


Start Here

- **About Learning Disabilities** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/conditioninfo>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/learning/informacion>]
- **Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Dyscalculia: Helping Kids with Learning Disorders Thrive**
[<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/learning-disabilities/Pages/Types-of-Learning-Problems.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/health-issues/conditions/learning-disabilities/paginas/types-of-learning-problems.aspx>]
- **Learning Disabilities** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learningdisabilities>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.ninds.nih.gov/es/trastornos/problemas-de-aprendizaje>]
- **Learning Disorders** [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-With-Learning-Disorders-016.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
- **What Are Some Signs of Learning Disabilities?** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/conditioninfo/signs>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/learning/informacion/indicadores>]


Symptoms

- **Keeping Up in School? Identifying Learning Problems** [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/special-collections/parenting/keeping-up-school>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/seguir-el-ritmo-en-la-escuela>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- **How Are Learning Disabilities Diagnosed?** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/conditioninfo/diagnosed>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/learning/informacion/diagnostican>]


Treatments and Therapies

- **What Are the Treatments for Learning Disabilities?** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/conditioninfo/treatment>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/learning/informacion/tratamientos>]





Related Issues

- **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/iep.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/iep.html>]


Specifics

- **What Are Reading Disorders?** [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/reading/conditioninfo/disorders>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/reading/informacion/trastornos>]



Genetics

- 47,XXX syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/47xyy-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Aarskog-Scott syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/aarskog-scott-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Smith-Kingsmore syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/smith-kingsmore-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Triple X syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/triple-x-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Statistics and Research

- Estimated Prevalence of Children with Diagnosed Developmental Disabilities in the United States, 2014-2016 [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db291.htm>] (National Center for Health Statistics)
- NICHD Learning Disabilities Research Information [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/researchinfo>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Dyslexia [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Dyslexia%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Learning Disabilities [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Learning+Disabilities%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Reducing incidents of violence and aggression and self-harm on a secure... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40754344>]
- Article: Developing service models for adult palliative and end of life care... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40713059>]
- Article: University service utilization patterns in students with specific learning disabilities: An... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40668806>]
- Learning Disabilities -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Learning+Disabilities%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Decoding Dyslexia: Helping Kids Who Struggle with Reading [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/02/decoding-dyslexia>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/decodificando-la-dislexia>]
- Learning Disorders Can Make It Hard for a Child to Read, Write or Do Simple Math. Know the Symptoms and Find Out What You Can Do. [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/learning-disorders/art-20046105?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/learning-disorders/art-20046105?p=1>]
- Learning Problems [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/learning-disabilities.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/learning-disabilities.html>]

Teenagers

- Understanding Dyslexia [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/dyslexia.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/dyslexia.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Developmental reading disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001406.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001406.htm>]
- Dysgraphia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001543.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001543.htm>]
- Mathematics disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001534.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001534.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Aarskog syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001654.htm>]

Developmental reading disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001406.htm>]

Dysgraphia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001543.htm>]

Mathematics disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001534.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/attentiondeficithyperactivitydisorder.html>]

Developmental Disabilities [<https://medlineplus.gov/developmentaldisabilities.html>]

Speech and Language Problems in Children [<https://medlineplus.gov/speechandlanguageproblemsinchildren.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Learning Disabilities* is the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx>]

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[\[https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html) .

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