



Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities

A learning disability is a perceptual difficulty. Any one of the sense's functioning can be impaired. A learning disability is most likely to be one of a genetic, neurological origin. Learning disabilities may be categorized broadly as reading, language, processing and mathematics deficits. The majority of students with learning disabilities have their primary deficits in basic reading skills or written expression.

Some examples of possible accommodations that a student with a learning disability may require include (but are not limited to):

- "Dear Professor Memos" verifying the need for accommodations
- Priority/early course registration
- Accommodated testing for in-class and online exams and quizzes
- Alternate format texts and handouts, including audio and electronic format
- Note-taking services and/or the use of an audio recorder for class lectures
- Allowance of laptops, tablets, or assistive technology in the classroom
- Regular advising meetings with an assigned D²A² advisor

The following are some considerations to keep in mind when working with students with learning disabilities in the classroom:

- Allow students to tape lectures and discussions, including those with labs or involving media or online, and/or have a note-taker. Attempting to focus on lecturing and taking notes can be problematic.
- Encourage the use of a study classmate to exchange information about class notes and reading.
- Allow students to sit in the front of the room to reduce distractions.
- If necessary, allow students to answer essay questions orally or on a tape recorder. Often these students will lose focus when trying to put thoughts and ideas on paper.
- Encourage use of a schedule booklet or calendar with designated study times to increase organizational skills.
- If possible, assist students in seeing how to apply theory.
- If possible, weigh spelling and grammar less heavily than content expressed. If not possible, allow a spell checker and assist the student by pointing out specific grammatical or written expression errors. (Students with learning disabilities are not being "lazy," often they cannot see/learn the error, as language processing is the disability.)
- Remember that a component of learning disability is that the student can study with ferocity and remember something one day and not the other.
- Present material both verbally and in writing.
- Permit the use of a calculator for students with this recommended accommodation. (Often, with a calculator or formula sheet, the student can apply the information to the problem, even though they cannot memorize the formula.)

Additional Resources:

Learning Disabilities (DO-IT, University of Washington)	https://www.washington.edu/doi/learning-disabilities
Teaching College Students with Learning Disabilities (Dickinson College)	https://www.dickinson.edu/download/downloads/id/5193/using_udi_for_college_students_with_learning_disabilities.pdf
Instructional Strategies for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (Ferris State University)	https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/colleges/university/disability/faculty-staff/classroom-issues/learning-disabilities/LD-strategy.htm
Instruction Strategies for Students with Learning Disabilities (Asnuntuck Community College)	https://www.asnuntuck.edu/sites/default/files/INSTRUCTIONAL%20STRATEGIES%20FOR%20STUDENTS%20WITH%20LEARNING%20DISABILITIES.pdf
Learning & Psychological Disabilities Classroom Strategies: A Faculty Guide (Pine Technical College)	http://www.pine.edu/student-services/counseling-services/classroom-strategies-for-teaching-students-with-psychological-and-learning-disabilities.pdf
Strategies for Teaching a Student with a Math-Related Learning Disability (DO-IT, University of Washington)	https://www.washington.edu/doi/what-are-strategies-teaching-student-math-related-learning-disability
Pedagogical Strategies for Teachers of Learning Disabled Students (Drew University)	https://users.drew.edu/%7Eesjamieso/LDpedagogy.htm
Designing Writing Assignments that are Accessible to All Students (Drew University)	https://users.drew.edu/%7Eesjamieso/LDwriting.htm
Invisible Disabilities and Postsecondary Education (DO-It, University of Washington)	https://www.washington.edu/doi/videos/index.php?vid=36