

**Adult Basic  
Education**

# **Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners**

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS

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## **SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREDUCATED ADULT LEARNERS**

### **Adult Learners are Diverse:**

- They vary widely among ages, races, socioeconomic levels, abilities, skills, job experiences, and personal goals.
- They come from varying religious, cultural, and language backgrounds.
- They have a wide range of educational backgrounds including those with little or no formal education, those with a history of special education, those who dropped out at an early age, and those who completed high school.
- They have well-developed identities, values, and beliefs.
- They have a wealth of life experiences, which can become learning resources.

### **Many Adult Learners Choose to Attend School Voluntarily:**

- They believe that education will help to increase their technical competence, employability, and sense of self-worth.
- They expect that education will enable them to respond to competition and change in the job market.
- They hope that education will help them solve problems in their daily lives.
- They see education as a means to maintain and enhance their social worth and success in other social settings such as the workplace, home, church, or community.

### **Adult Learners Tend to Be Pragmatic:**

- They expect education to be practical and satisfy their personal goals.
- They see instructional quality and relevance of the learning as important factors in educational experiences.
- They have personal, family, and work-related commitments which take precedence over school-related responsibilities.

### **Some Adult Learners have Special Learning Needs**

- They may have special physical concerns or disabilities related to vision or hearing problems, mobility impairments, health conditions, or simple aches and pains.
- They may have learning disabilities which affect visual and auditory processing and cause difficulties in reading, expressive language, math, attention, memory, organization, social interaction, or a variety of other difficulties.
- They may have problems meeting basic needs because of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, alcohol/drug abuse, or psychological impairments.

### **Adult Learners Often Perceive Many Barriers to School Attendance**

- They may see inconvenient class schedules, inaccessible locations, unclear registration procedures, etc. (institutional barriers) as interfering with their ability to enroll in educational programs.
- They may allow the opinions of friends and family members (fear of social disapproval) to influence their decision to enroll in classes.
- They sometimes have low self-esteem, memories of prior academic failure, or negative feelings about past school experiences. (dispositional barriers) which impact on their retention during the first few weeks of class.
- They may have problems with family health care, transportation, child care; lack of free time; changes in work schedules; etc. (situational barriers) which often interfere with regular school attendance.
- They may lack the organizational, motivational, and problem-solving skills (sometimes due to learning disabilities) necessary for consistent participation in educational programs.

## FACTS ABOUT AGING ADULT LEARNERS

### ISSUES

#### Hearing Issues:

- Maximum auditory acuity is attained between 10 and 15 years of age.
- After age 15, there is a gradual but consistent decline in hearing until about 65 years of age.
- Hearing loss due to aging is a very slow onset hearing loss and can vary in degree from a mild loss to a severe loss. Word discrimination (understanding) is often worse than would be expected from the degree of loss.
- There is a somewhat greater tendency for men to show impaired hearing than for women.
- In the aging process, there is a loss of auditory acuity on the high tones.
- As aging occurs, reaction to auditory stimuli slows down.
- Many older adults find it difficult to follow rapid speech in spite of little or no hearing loss.
- Loss of hearing reduces the ability to recall long sentences.
- Older learners do not retain as much information from oral presentations as younger students.
- The inability to hear can produce emotional disturbances such as depression, anxiety, or frustration.

### INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

#### To Accommodate Learners:

- Speak more slowly and distinctly as the age of the group increases.
- Use simple, well-chosen words that are clear and meaningful, and difficult to understand.
- Avoid the use of words that are lengthy
- Enunciate unusual words, unfamiliar names, numbers, etc.
- Write all important information down as you speak; vision will supplement a hearing loss.
- Print key words and phrases on the chalkboard, overhead or flipchart when working with a group.
- Try to eliminate or reduce inside or outside background noises that may interfere with hearing.
- Before answering a question directed to you by a member of the group, repeat or rephrase the question so that everyone can hear.
- Provide preferential seating to hard-of-hearing students.

### **Vision Issues**

- For normal learning tasks, an adult by age 30 requires 120 watts of illumination; by age 50, 180 watts are required.
- Visual acuity attains its maximum at about 18 years of age.
- With advancing age, the lens loses its elasticity and cannot focus readily.
- A major change in visual acuity occurs between age 45 and 55.
- About 85% of all learning is visual.

### **Speed and Motor Issues**

- Compared to youth, adults usually require a longer time to perform learning tasks.
- Older adults take longer to complete handwriting and copying activities.
- Decline in timed motor tasks begins between the ages of 18 and 40, and is marked after 40.
- Reaction time also slows with age.
- Scores on tests measuring perception and dexterity decline with age.
- There are observable increases in response time by middle age in tasks requiring sharp perception and/or complex decision-making.

### **To Accommodate Learners:**

- Use good illumination. Older adults need better light and more light.
- Use large charts, diagrams, and pictures.
- Use large, legible letters when writing or printing on chalkboards, flipcharts or overheads.
- Write using simple words and phrases; avoid the use of abbreviations.
- Replace shiny slate chalkboards with new rough chalkboards in order to obtain maximum contrast.
- Use neutral backgrounds and choose colors which will create the greatest contrast.
- Use a large font when typing materials you plan to reproduce or preparing overhead transparencies.
- Make photocopies from originals; photocopies of copies become muddy, distorted and unreadable.

### **To Accommodate Learners:**

- Remove time restrictions whenever possible in order to reduce stress.
- Allow adult learners to choose self-paced activities.
- Offer practice in taking timed examinations.

### **Cognitive/Emotional/Social Issues:**

- The natural course of aging does NOT include cognitive decline.
- Scores on tests such as vocabulary show increases with age.
- Age itself does little to affect an adult's power to learn or think.
- For adults, motivation is a major factor in performance.
- Most adults have higher standards of performance than youth.
- Adults, even more than children, are sensitive to failure in their learning situation.
- Adults may feel inhibited from active participation in discussion by a lack of confidence in their own abilities.
- Adult learning ability is influenced by the amount of formal education received.
- Negative experiences from the past may interfere with new learning.
- Emotional association with words or events may affect the adult's ability to gain new knowledge.
- Once the adult has formed a perception of a stimulus, it is difficult for him or her to change his or her mind.
- Higher dogmatism, rigidity, and cautiousness are associated with aging.
- Adults are often problem-centered versus subject-centered.
- It is difficult for an adult to do a familiar task in an unfamiliar way.
- How recently an adult participated in an educational activity affects his or her ability to learn.

### **To Accommodate Learners:**

- Provide a variety of learning options appropriate to an adult's learning style, way of thinking, and preference for individual versus group work.
- Provide opportunities for adults to analyze and expand their modes of learning.
- Provide the learner with continuous progress reports so that motivation will be sustained.
- Acknowledge completion of goals, objectives or tasks, particularly those identified by the learner.
- Offer team-building activities which encourage classmates to become acquainted, discuss learning experiences, and share successes with each other.
- Provide opportunities to learn from peers as well as from an instructor.
- Help learners to feel comfortable with the learning environment.
- Allow learners to associate new learning with previous positive experiences.
- Provide meaningful learning experiences which give learners an opportunity to apply new information and ideas to practical situations in their own lives.
- Allow learners to provide input into the planning of their own learning goals and processes.
- Provide tasks that allow learners to succeed within the contexts of their limited time and demanding lives.

## MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS

A.H. Maslow has supplied a theory of human motivation. According to this theory, all individuals share certain fundamental needs. These needs can be placed in hierarchical order. Maslow's Hierarchy can be visualized as a pyramid.



At the top is the need for "self-actualization"--achieving our full potential given our individual strengths and weaknesses. At the base are "physiological" or survival needs such as food and shelter. Basic needs must be met before an individual can respond to higher needs. In other words, a person cannot satisfy any of the higher levels unless the needs below are reasonably satisfied.

Some adults entering your classroom may have such unmet basic needs that they will be unable to focus on their studies. Before they can effectively learn, they may need assistance from community service agencies. Part of their learning may need to include information sessions on community service programs in the area. Adults in your program may also need to learn how to access the appropriate services (food, housing, clothing, domestic violence problems, medical and emotional problems, etc.). A sample survey is included on the following pages, which may help you identify some of these needs.

Your local area may also have a community services directory. Ask your Peer Trainer where you can obtain such a directory. Also, ask your Regional Coordinator for information from the *ABE Marketing Kit*, "Local Agency Contact Section."

## ABE SURVEY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex:  Male  Female

Last Grade Completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status:  Single  Married  Divorced  Widowed

Where did you grow up?  City  Suburb  Small Town  Country

**List three things you liked and disliked about school:**

Likes	Dislikes

List your hobbies:

Write a brief statement on why you are attending this learning center, and what you want to learn and study during your program.

Describe your personal goals/objectives in life.

Short Term Goal/Objectives	Long Term Goals/Objectives

Check the choices that describe you the best:

**Class Problems:**

- It's hard for me to speak up in class.
- It's hard for me to work by myself.
- I get nervous taking tests.
- I get distracted if it is too noisy.
- I have a lot of things on my mind, so sometimes it's hard for me to concentrate.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Coming to Class:**

- I have transportation problems
- I have health problems
- I have childcare problems
- I have elderly people to take care of at home
- I have family members or friends who don't think I should go to school
- I don't have time to do the housework
- My work schedule keeps changing
- I have a lot of responsibilities

Read the descriptions of how you learn. Check if you like it, it's OK, or you dislike it.

**Learning Styles**

	<u>Like</u>	<u>OK</u>	<u>Dislike</u>
When I work with my hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I work in a group of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I listen to someone explain something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I read to myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I watch a movie or video	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I do worksheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I work with one other student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When someone shows me how to do something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## ASSESSING LEARNING STYLES

As adult educators, we need to become more aware of the different modes of learning. The tendency of most teachers is to deliver educational input in their own preferred style. Many times our students have had difficulty in the learning environment because they only received one type of input.

Learners are usually more successful when they receive input in their preferred learning style. It is important to help each learner become aware of his or her learning style and to provide appropriate input to enhance learning. Learners who are aware of how they best receive input can choose appropriate materials and settings to work in as part of their plan of study.

Many instruments are available to help adult learners discover their preferred learning styles. Included in this Section of the Handbook are two examples of inventories (pages 12-19) which you may reproduce. Many other inventories are available for purchase by your program. A few are listed below:

### **Learning Style Inventories**

*PPLS - Pues Perceptual Learning Style Inventory*, Pues & Associates, P.O. Box 572033, Tarzana, CA 91357.

*Dunn's Learning Style Inventory* (Rita & Kenneth Dunn, St. John's University, N.Y.) Available from: Price Systems, Inc., Box 3067, Lawrence, KS 66046.

*Embedded Figures Test*, Herman A. Witkin. Available: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 557 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306.

*Field-Dependence-Independence* (Herman A Witkin, Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA).

*How Do You Learn?* (J. Lee & C. Pulvino, Educational Media Corp., Minneapolis, Minn.).

*Kolb Learning Style* (David Kolb, Case Western Reserve University). Available from: McBer and Co., 137 Newberry St., Boston, MA 02116.

*Learning Channel Preference Checklist* (Lynn O'Brien, Rockville, MD).

*Learning Style Inventory* (J. Brown & R. Cooper, Educational Activities, Freeport, N.Y.).

*NASSP Learning Style Inventory*, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, VA

*4MAT System* (Bernice McCarthy, expanded on Kolb's work).

*Swassing-Barbe Modality Index* - in the Zaner-Bloser Modality Kit; (Barbe, R. Swassing, and M. Milone, Ohio State University) Available from: Zaner-Bloser, Inc., P.O. Box 16764, Columbus, OH 43216.

## C.I.T.E. LEARNING STYLES INSTRUMENT

The *C.I.T.E.* Instrument (Babich, Burdine, Albright, and Randol, 1976) was formulated at the Murdoch Teachers Center in Wichita, Kansas to help teachers determine the learning styles preferred by their students. It is divided into three main areas:

- **Information gathering** includes auditory language, visual language, auditory numerical, visual numerical, and auditory-visual language, auditory numerical, visual numerical, and auditory-visual-kinesthetic combination.
- **Work conditions** focus on whether a student works better alone or in a group.
- **Expressiveness** considers if a student is better at oral or written communication.

Scores on the Learning Styles Inventory fall into one of three categories: major, minor, and negligible. These categories may be defined as follows:

- Major: The student prefers this mode of learning, feels comfortable with it, and uses it for important (to the student) learning. A student does not necessarily have one and only one preferred style.
- Minor: The student uses this mode but usually as a second choice or in conjunction with other learning styles.
- Negligible: The student prefers not to use this if other choices are available. The student does not feel comfortable with this style.

Frank B. Mann, III, Wyoming County, West Virginia, programmed a computer application system for the *C.I.T.E. Learning Styles Inventory* so that students may respond to the questions using the computer and the computer tallies the scores automatically. Teachers may obtain copies by contacting Louise Miller at 1-800-766-7372 e-mail: [lbmiller@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:lbmiller@access.k12.wv.us)

### Definitions and Teaching Techniques for Major Learning Styles

The following are descriptions of learning styles found in every learner to a major, minor, or negligible extent and teaching suggestions related to each learning style.

Learning Style	Teaching Techniques
<p><b>Visual-Language:</b> This is the student who learns well from seeing words in books, on the chalkboard, charts or workbooks. He/she may write words down that are given orally in order to learn by seeing them on paper. He or she remembers and uses information better if it has been read.</p>	<p>This student will benefit from a variety of books, pamphlets and written materials on several levels of difficulty. Given some time alone with a book, he or she may learn more than in class. Make sure important information has been given on paper, or that he or she takes notes if you want this student to remember specific information.</p>

Learning Style	Teaching Techniques
<p><b>Visual-Numerical:</b> This student has to see numbers on the board, in a book, or on paper in order to work with them. He or she is more likely to remember and understand math facts if he or she has seen them. He or she does not seem to need as much oral explanation.</p>	<p>This student will benefit from worksheets, workbooks, and texts. Give a variety of written materials and allow time to study it. In playing games and being involved in activities with numbers and number problems, make sure they are visible, printed numbers, not oral games and activities. Important data should be given on paper.</p>
<p><b>Auditory-Language:</b> This is the student who learns from hearing words spoken. You may hear him or her vocalizing or see the lips or throat move as he or she reads, particularly when striving to understand new material. He or she will be more capable of understanding and remembering words or facts that have been learned by hearing.</p>	<p>This student will benefit from hearing audio tapes, rote oral practice, lecture or a class discussion. He or she may benefit from using a tape recorder to make tapes to listen to later, by teaching another student, or conversing with the teacher. Groups of two or more, games or interaction activities provide the sounds of words being spoken that is so important to this student.</p>
<p><b>Auditory-Numerical:</b> This student learns from hearing numbers and oral explanations. He or she may remember phone and locker numbers with ease, and be successful with oral numbers, games and puzzles. He or she may do just about as well without a math book, for written materials are not as important. He or she can probably work problems in his or her head. You may hear this student saying the numbers aloud or see the lips move as a problem is read.</p>	<p>This student will benefit from math sound tapes or from working with other people, talking about a problem. Even reading written explanations aloud will help. Games or activities in which the number problems are spoken will help. This student will benefit from tutoring another or delivering an explanation to his or her study group or to the teacher. Make sure important facts are spoken.</p>
<p><b>Auditory-Visual-Kinesthetic:</b> The A/V/K student learns best by experience and self-involvement. He or she definitely needs a combination of stimuli. The manipulation of material along with the accompanying sights and sounds (words and numbers seen and spoken) will make a big difference to him or her. This student may not seem able to understand, or keep his or her mind on work unless he or she is totally involved. He or she seeks to handle, touch and work with what is being learned. Sometimes just writing or a symbolic wiggling of the fingers is a symptom of the A/V/K learner.</p>	<p>This student must be given more than just a reading or math assignment. Involve him or her with at least one other student and give him or her an activity to relate to the assignment. Accompany an audio-tape with pictures, objects and an activity such as drawing or writing or following directions with physical involvement.</p>

Learning Style	Teaching Techniques
<p><b>Social-Individual:</b> This student gets more work done alone. He or she thinks best, and remembers more when he or she has learned by alone. He or she cares more for his or her own opinions than for the ideas of others. You will not have much trouble keeping this student from over-socializing during class.</p>	<p>This student needs to be allowed to do important learning alone. If you feel he or she needs socialization, save it for a non-learning situation. Let him or her go to the library or back in a corner of the room to be alone. Do not force group work on him or her when it will make the student irritable to be held back or distracted by others. Some great thinkers are loners.</p>
<p><b>Social-Group:</b> This student strives to study with at least one other student and he or she will not get as much done alone. He or she values others' ideas and preferences. Group interaction increases his or her learning and later recognition of facts. Socializing is important to this student.</p>	<p>This student needs to do important learning with someone else. The stimulation of the group may be more important at certain times in the learning process than at others and you may be able to facilitate the timing for this student.</p>
<p><b>Expressive Oral:</b> This student prefers to tell what he or she knows. He or she talks fluently, comfortably, and clearly. The teacher may find that this learner knows more than written tests show. He or she is probably less shy than others about giving reports or talking to the teacher or classmates. The muscular coordination involved in writing may be difficult for this learner. Organizing and putting thoughts on paper may be too slow and tedious a task for this student.</p>	<p>Allow this student to make oral reports instead of written ones. Whether in conference, small group or large, evaluate him or her more by what is said than by what is written. Reports can be on tape, to save class time. Demand a minimum of written work, but a good quality so he or she will not be ignorant of the basics of composition and legibility. Grammar can be corrected orally but is best done at another time.</p>
<p><b>Expressiveness-Written:</b> his student can write fluent essays and good answers on tests to show what he or she knows. He or she feels less comfortable, perhaps even stupid when oral answers are required. His or her thoughts are better organized on paper than when they are given orally.</p>	<p>This student needs to be allowed to write reports, keep notebooks and journals for credit and take written tests for evaluation. Oral transactions should be under non-pressured conditions, perhaps even in a one-to-one conference.</p>

**C.I.T.E. LEARNING STYLES INSTRUMENT**  
 Babich, A.M., Burdine, P., Albright, L., Randol, P.  
 Wichita Public Schools, Murdoch Teachers Center

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Read each statement carefully and decide which of the four responses agrees with how you feel about the statement. Put an X on the number of your response.

Questions	Most Like Me		Least Like Me	
	4	3	2	1
1. When I make things for my studies, I remember what I have learned better.	4	3	2	1
2. Written assignments are easy for me.	4	3	2	1
3. I learn better if someone reads a book to me than if I read silently to myself.	4	3	2	1
4. I learn best when I study alone.	4	3	2	1
5. Having assignment directions written on the board makes them easier to understand.	4	3	2	1
6. It's harder for me to do a written assignment than an oral one.	4	3	2	1
7. When I do math problems in my head, I say the numbers to myself.	4	3	2	1
8. If I need help in the subject, I will ask a classmate for help.	4	3	2	1
9. I understand a math problem that is written down better than one I hear.	4	3	2	1
10. I don't mind doing written assignments.	4	3	2	1
11. I remember things I hear better than I read.	4	3	2	1
12. I remember more of what I learn if I learn it when I am alone.	4	3	2	1
13. I would rather read a story than listen to it read.	4	3	2	1
14. I feel like I talk smarter than I write.	4	3	2	1
15. If someone tells me three numbers to add I can usually get the right answer without writing them down.	4	3	2	1
16. I like to work in a group because I learn from the others in the group.	4	3	2	1
17. Written math problems are easier for me to do than oral ones.	4	3	2	1
18. Writing a spelling word several times helps me remember it better.	4	3	2	1
19. I find it easier to remember what I have heard than what I have read.	4	3	2	1
20. It is more fun to learn with classmates at first, but it is hard to study with them.	4	3	2	1
21. I like written directions better than spoken ones.	4	3	2	1

22. If homework were oral, I would do it all.	4	3	2	1
23. When I hear a phone number, I can remember it without writing it down.	4	3	2	1
24. I get more work done when I work with someone.	4	3	2	1
25. Seeing a number makes more sense to me than hearing a number.	4	3	2	1
26. I like to do things like simple repairs or crafts with my hands.	4	3	2	1
27. The things I write on paper sound better than when I say them.	4	3	2	1
28. I study best when no one is around to talk or listen to.	4	3	2	1
29. I would rather read things in a book than have the teacher tell me about them.	4	3	2	1
30. Speaking is a better way than writing if you want someone to understand it better.	4	3	2	1
31. When I have a written math problem to do, I say it to myself to understand it better.	4	3	2	1
32. I can learn more about a subject if I am with a small group of students.	4	3	2	1
33. Seeing the price of something written down is easier for me to understand than having someone tell me the price.	4	3	2	1
34. I like to make things with my hands.	4	3	2	1
35. I like tests that call for sentence completion or written answers.	4	3	2	1
36. I understand more from a class discussion than from reading about a subject.	4	3	2	1
37. I remember the spelling of a word better if I see it written down than if someone spells it out loud.	4	3	2	1
38. Spelling and grammar rules make it hard for me to say what I want to in writing.	4	3	2	1
39. It makes it easier when I say the numbers of a problem to myself as I work it out.	4	3	2	1
40. I like to study with other people.	4	3	2	1
41. When the teachers say a number, I really don't understand it until I see it written down.	4	3	2	1
42. I understand what I have learned better when I am involved in making something for the subject.	4	3	2	1
43. Sometimes I say dumb things, but writing gives me time to correct myself.	4	3	2	1
44. I do well on tests if they are about things I hear in class.	4	3	2	1
45. I can't think as well when I work with someone else as when I work alone.	4	3	2	1

## C.I.T.E. LEARNING STYLES INSTRUMENT WORKSHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Look at each statement number on the worksheet below. Find the statement number on the Learning Styles Inventory and get the "most like/least like" number of the response you selected for each statement. Write the number (1-4) in the blank provided. Total the numbers under each heading. Multiply the total by two. Look at the scores to decide if this is major, minor or negligible.

### Visual Language

5 \_\_\_\_\_  
13 \_\_\_\_\_  
21 \_\_\_\_\_  
29 \_\_\_\_\_  
37 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Social-Individual

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
12 \_\_\_\_\_  
20 \_\_\_\_\_  
28 \_\_\_\_\_  
45 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Visual-Numerical

9 \_\_\_\_\_  
17 \_\_\_\_\_  
25 \_\_\_\_\_  
33 \_\_\_\_\_  
41 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Social-Group

8 \_\_\_\_\_  
16 \_\_\_\_\_  
24 \_\_\_\_\_  
32 \_\_\_\_\_  
40 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Auditory-Language

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
11 \_\_\_\_\_  
19 \_\_\_\_\_  
36 \_\_\_\_\_  
44 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Expressiveness-Oral

6 \_\_\_\_\_  
14 \_\_\_\_\_  
22 \_\_\_\_\_  
30 \_\_\_\_\_  
38 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Auditory-Numerical

7 \_\_\_\_\_  
15 \_\_\_\_\_  
23 \_\_\_\_\_  
31 \_\_\_\_\_  
39 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Expressiveness-Written

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
10 \_\_\_\_\_  
27 \_\_\_\_\_  
35 \_\_\_\_\_  
43 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

### Auditory-Visual-Kinesthetic

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
18 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 \_\_\_\_\_  
34 \_\_\_\_\_  
42 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X 2 = \_\_\_\_\_ (Score)

Score: 34-40 = Major Learning Style

20-32 = Minor Learning Style

10-18 = Negligible Use

## LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCE FORM

Kathy Clark, Linn-Benton Community College

Place a check on the answer that is right for you.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. I can learn more about a subject through listening than reading.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I follow written directions better than oral directions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I like to write things down or take notes for visual review.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I bear down extremely hard with pen or pencil when writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I need explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I enjoy working with tools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I am skillful and enjoy developing and making graphs and chart.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I remember best by writing things down several times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I can understand and follow directions on maps.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I do better at academic subjects by listening to lectures and tapes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I play with coins or keys in pockets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I learn to spell better by saying the letters out loud than by writing the word on paper.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I understand a news article better by reading about it in the paper than by listening to the radio.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I learn by "finger spelling" the words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I would rather listen to a good speech or lecture than read the same material in a textbook.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I am good at solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I grip objects in my hands during learning period.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading about it in the newspaper.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I get information on an interesting subject by reading relevant materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I follow oral directions better than written ones.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Scoring Form

Scoring Procedures

YES = 5 points

NO = 1 point

Place the point value on the line next to its item number. Next, add the values to get your preference score under each heading. For example, if you answered question number 2 with yes, give yourself 5 points and write the 5 next to the number 2 under VISUAL.

### VISUAL

No. Points

2    \_\_\_

3    \_\_\_

7    \_\_\_

10   \_\_\_

14   \_\_\_

16   \_\_\_

19   \_\_\_

22   \_\_\_

### AUDITORY

No. Points

1    \_\_\_

5    \_\_\_

8    \_\_\_

11   \_\_\_

13   \_\_\_

18   \_\_\_

21   \_\_\_

24   \_\_\_

### TACTILE

No. Points

4    \_\_\_

6    \_\_\_

9    \_\_\_

12   \_\_\_

15   \_\_\_

17   \_\_\_

20   \_\_\_

23   \_\_\_

VPS = \_\_\_\_\_

APS = \_\_\_\_\_

TPS = \_\_\_\_\_

VPS is visual preference score

APS is auditory preference score

TPS is tactile preference score

From: Kathy Clark, Linn-Benton Community College

## LEARNING DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

Adult education practitioners need to be aware of adults with special needs (learning disabilities and attention disorders, physical and psychological disabilities, and mental impairments) and to provide effective instruction to these individuals. These practitioners need to understand the nature of disabilities, screening instruments, referral systems, and teaching strategies and accommodations that can assist these learners.

### LEARNING STYLES VERSUS LEARNING DISABILITIES

All of us learn through our senses. We obtain information from a variety of modalities (visual-print, visual-non-print, auditory receptive, auditory expressive, tactile, etc.). Our preferred modalities are our learning styles. Some adults have impairments in one or more of their learning modalities caused by learning disabilities (LD). Adults with LD can ONLY receive information from their intact learning modalities. Thus, for an adult with LD, his or her learning style is *not simply a preference*, it is *mandatory*. Adults with LD MUST receive information in particular ways or they cannot process the information and therefore cannot learn it.

**Learning Disabilities (LD)** can impact academic performance in listening, speaking, reading, writing, mathematics, etc. Specific LD (such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia), is a permanent lifelong condition which interferes with learning and academic performance. Although individuals with LD have average or even above average intelligence, without reasonable accommodations (extra time, spell-checking devices, calculators, readers or scribes, etc.) to level the playing field, these individuals are presented with innumerable barriers.

### Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders

**(ADD/ADHD)** are also lifelong conditions which can cause problems in academic performance due to the individual's inattentiveness, restlessness, lack of organization and inability to concentrate and complete assignments. Adults with ADD/ADHD may require frequent breaks and private settings.

**Physical Disabilities** may also hinder some adult learners in reaching their fullest potential. While some individuals were born with impaired vision, hearing, or mobility, many other adults have acquired physical disabilities as a result of accidents, injuries, or the effects of aging. These disabilities may include systemic conditions such as AIDS, asthma, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, etc; brain impairments due to head injuries, drug abuse, strokes, etc.; or orthopedic problems affecting the bones and joints. Adults with physical disabilities may be dealing with mobility problems, pain, discomfort, fatigue, and effects of medication such as drowsiness, nausea, and memory loss. They may require special attention or equipment in order to succeed.

**Psychological or Emotional Disabilities** are DSM-IV defined conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, etc. The condition itself or the medication used to treat the condition may create learning problems for the individual involving concentration, restlessness, anxiety, memory loss, frustration, etc.

**Mental Impairments or Developmental Disabilities**, such as mental retardation, may limit the ability of other individuals to achieve higher academic levels. While these individuals may be unable to attain high school equivalency, many are able to achieve a sufficient level of basic skills to enable them to enter the workforce or go on for specific vocational training. These learners may not qualify for testing accommodations but require classroom and learning modifications such as constant reinforcement and concrete application of their learning in order to progress.

### **CLASSROOM AND TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Students who present documentation of their disabilities have a right under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to request reasonable accommodations. Depending on the type of disability, the accommodations may include (but are not limited to):

- extended time for learning and testing
- private settings free of interruptions and distractions for learning and testing
- frequent breaks or change of activity
- calculators
- spell checkers
- word processors
- audiotapes of presentations, texts, and tests
- enlarged print
- Braille texts
- readers
- note-takers or scribes for learning and testing
- sign language interpreters
- assistive listening devices (ALD)
- furniture or room modifications to accommodate wheelchairs, etc.

### **GED TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Many adult learners state that getting a *General Education Development (GED)* is their primary reason for entering adult education programs. However, some adults who seem intelligent and study diligently may still fail in test-taking situations. Some individuals simply cannot perform under standard test-taking conditions (hours of sitting still to take a series of tests, a room full of people, a clock ticking off the time, a test which must be read silently). These adults may know the information perfectly well and yet be unable to demonstrate what they know because learning disabilities or attention disorders interfere with their performance under certain conditions.

The *GED Testing Service (GEDTS)* has made it possible for individuals with learning disabilities and ADHD, as well as physical or psychological disabilities to take the *GED* test with specific accommodations at no additional charge.

If you are working with a learner that you believe may have a learning disability, it is important to access as much information about the individual as possible, while

maintaining strict confidentiality. If the student has a record of special education, he or she may have been diagnosed as a child. Another individual may have been through psychological testing for some other reason. These records may be accessed and used to document the condition.

In addition, it is important that teachers who work with the student provide information about the types of classroom accommodations that have been used successfully with the individual (extra time, frequent breaks, a quiet area for study, successful use of A/V materials in teaching, dramatic differences when using a calculator versus none, etc.)

Some students with physical disabilities (vision, hearing, physical or emotional impairments) may also be able to access certain accommodations. Additional information on the process for obtaining *GED* testing accommodations is found in Section 8 of this Handbook.

### **SERVING ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM**

The following information is from *Bridges to Practice Guidebook 1: Preparing to Serve Adult with Learning Disabilities*, published by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center. This information may help you recognize problems associated with LD.

Remember, teachers are not professional diagnosticians. Many times we can recognize symptoms that *may* indicate LD, but it is not our role to label students. Some adults have documentation which identifies their LD and are thus legally entitled to instructional and testing accommodations. Whether or not a learner has a diagnosis, teachers may begin to address the needs of students using some of the information and ideas on the following pages.

## **NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON LEARNING DISABILITIES DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES**

There are several definitions of learning disabilities used throughout the country by professional and advocacy organizations and service agencies. The National ALLD Center selected the following definition of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) in its 1994 revision:

*Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability, although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction).*

The NJCLD definition is presented below in an annotated format to help you interpret its meaning as applied to adults.

<b>NJCLD Definition</b>	<b>Application to Adults</b>
<i>Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders</i>	<i>There is neither one type of learning disability nor one profile for adults with learning disabilities. There are many different patterns of difficulties. For example, one adult may have a serious reading disability, while another may be able to read adequately, but not be able to communicate thoughts in writing.</i>
<i>manifested by significant difficulties</i>	<i>All individuals have strengths and weaknesses. Adults with learning disabilities have serious problems which affect one of life's major functions in the home and the workplace. For example, an adult may not be able to work at a preferred job due to lack of literacy skills related to learning disabilities.</i>
<i>in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.</i>	<i>Learning disabilities are specific in nature. Learning problems encompass one or more ability areas; e.g., reading or math, but do not necessarily include all ability areas. They do not represent simply a delay in development.</i>
<i>These disorders are intrinsic to the individual,</i>	<i>Learning disabilities are part of a person's neurological make-up. They are not eliminated by changes in the environment such as increased exposure to literacy events. Although a person can learn to deal effectively with a learning disability, it doesn't go away.</i>

<i>presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction,</i>	Although most adults with learning disabilities will not have a medical diagnosis of neurological disorder, the assumption is that there is some sort of difference or difficulty in how the brain works. Current research is shedding greater light on this area.
<i>and may occur across the life span.</i>	Learning disabilities may be uncovered at different stages of a person's life, depending on many factors. Some factors include severity of the disorder; academic, vocational, and social setting demands; and educators' knowledge of learning disabilities. The symptoms change over time so that a learning disability in a 7-year-old child looks different from one in an adult.
<i>Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities</i>	Some adults will have difficulty in self-control, perceiving social situations appropriately, and getting along with other people.
<i>but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability,</i>	The problems described in self-regulation, social perception, and interaction--while often present in adults with learning disabilities--also occur in people with other disabilities as well. There are many reasons for these types of problems other than underlying learning disabilities.
<i>although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance)</i>	A learning disability may be present with other disorders, but these conditions are not the cause of the learning disability. For example, an adult may have a hearing loss along with a learning disability, but the hearing loss is not causing the learning disability. Also, learning disabilities are not related to low intelligence. In fact, most people with learning disabilities are average or above average in intelligence, but the impact of the disability may impair their ability to function well in school, at home, or in the workplace.
<i>or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction).</i>	Although learning disabilities are not the result of inadequate schooling or opportunity to learn, they are often exacerbated by these factors. For example, individuals with learning disabilities frequently have fewer opportunities to learn in their area of disability; they tend to be challenged less by their teachers and parents. Therefore, by the time individuals with learning disabilities become adults, they are further behind than the learning disability would predict.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

There is no single cause of learning disabilities and, therefore, no single set of characteristics. When considering adults with learning disabilities, it is important to recognize that a wide range of learning, social, and behavioral characteristics exist. Although these characteristics are not directly related to a lack of training or experience, a learning disability may have prevented an individual from profiting from these sources of information. The following characteristics are organized by deficit area: reading, writing, listening, speaking, mathematics, thinking, and "other."

## Reading Difficulties

The most prominent characteristic associated with LD is difficulty in learning to read. The term 'dyslexia' is often used to denote a reading problem, although in reality it is a disorder that interferes with the acquisition and processing of language and affects a variety of performance areas. In addition to the characteristics associated with dyslexia, an individual with LD may demonstrate some or most of the following reading characteristics:

Reading Characteristics	Examples
Does not read for pleasure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in leisure activities other than reading magazines or books; prefers more active pursuits.</li> <li>• Doesn't read stories to his/her children.</li> </ul>
Does not use reading to gather information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot easily use materials like newspapers and classified ads to obtain information.</li> </ul>
Has problems identifying individual sounds in spoken words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not attempt to sound out words in reading or does so incorrectly.</li> </ul>
Often needs many repetitions to learn to recognize a new or unused word.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May encounter a newly learned word in a text and not recognize it when it appears later in that text.</li> </ul>
Oral reading contains many errors, repetitions, and pauses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reads slowly and laboriously, if attempts at all.</li> <li>• May refuse to read orally.</li> </ul>
Efforts in reading are so focused on word recognition that it detracts from reading comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loses the meaning of text, but understands the same material when it is read aloud.</li> </ul>
Has problems with comprehension that go beyond word recognition. May have limited language skills that affect comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not understand the text when it is read to him/her.</li> </ul>
Has limited use of reading strategies. Is an inactive reader; not previewing text, monitoring comprehension, or summarizing what is read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When prompted to do so, does not describe strategies used to assist with decoding and comprehension of text.</li> </ul>
Rarely practices reading, which may compound reading difficulties. Lacks complex language and word knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes and uses fewer words, expressions, and sentence structures than peers.</li> </ul>

## Writing Difficulties

Many individuals with LD have difficulties with written expression. These problems often are found in combination with reading and spoken language difficulties. Writing difficulties often continue after other learning problems have been resolved.

“Dysgraphia” is a term some-times used to refer to writing problems. An individual with LD may demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics in writing:

Writing Characteristics	Examples
Has difficulty communicating through writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rarely writes letters or notes.</li><li>• Needs help completing forms such as job applications.</li></ul>
Written output is severely limited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Struggles to produce a written product.</li><li>• Produces short sentences and text with limited vocabulary.</li></ul>
Writing is disorganized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Omits critical parts or puts information in the wrong place. Writing lacks transition words.</li></ul>
Lacks a clear purpose for writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does not communicate a clear message.</li><li>• Expresses thoughts that don't contribute to the main idea.</li></ul>
Does not use the appropriate text structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uses sentences that contain errors in syntax or word choice.</li><li>• Fails to clearly indicate the referent of a pronoun.</li></ul>
Shows persistent problems in spelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spells phonetically.</li><li>• Leaves out letters.</li><li>• Refrains from writing words that are difficult to spell.</li></ul>
Has difficulties with mechanics of written expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Omits or misuses sentence markers such as capitals and end punctuation, making it difficult for the reader to understand the text.</li></ul>
Handwriting is sloppy and difficult to read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has awkward writing grip or position.</li><li>• Letters, words, and lines are misaligned or not spaced appropriately.</li></ul>
Demonstrates difficulties in revising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is reluctant to proofread or does not catch errors.</li><li>• Focuses primarily on the mechanics of writing, not on style and content.</li></ul>

## Listening Difficulties

Individuals with LD also may have problems with the processing of oral language. An individual with LD may demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics in listening:

Listening Characteristics	Examples
Has problems perceiving slight distinctions in words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Misunderstands a message with a word mistaken for a similar word. Might say, "Pick up the grass," instead of, "Pick up the glass."</li></ul>
Has a limited vocabulary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognizes and uses fewer words than peers when engaged in conversation or when gathering information by listening.</li></ul>
Finds abstract words or concepts difficult to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requests repetitions or more concrete explanations of ideas. Frequently asks for examples.</li></ul>
Has difficulty with nonliteral or figurative language such as metaphors, idioms, and sarcasm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does not understand jokes or comic strips.</li></ul>
Confuses the message in complex sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will eat lunch first if given the direction, "Eat lunch after you take this to the mail room."</li></ul>
Has difficulty with verbal memory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doesn't remember directions, phone numbers, jokes, stories, etc.</li></ul>
Has difficulty processing large amounts of spoken language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gets lost listening in classroom or large group presentations, complaining that people talk too fast.</li></ul>

**Speaking Difficulties** An individual with LD may have problems producing oral language. These may include one or more of the following characteristics:

Speaking Characteristics	Examples
Mispronounces words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds, substitutes, or rearranges sounds in words, as in <i>phenomenon</i> for <i>phenomenon</i> or <i>Pacific</i> for <i>specific</i>.</li> </ul>
Uses the wrong word, usually with similar sounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a similar-sounding word, like <i>generic</i> instead of <i>genetic</i>.</li> </ul>
Confuses the morphology, or structure, of words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses the wrong form of a word, such as calling the <i>Declaration of Independence</i> the <i>Declaring of Independence</i>.</li> </ul>
Has a limited vocabulary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses the same words over and over in giving information and explaining ideas.</li> <li>• Has difficulty conveying ideas.</li> </ul>
Makes grammatical errors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omits or uses grammatical markers incorrectly, such as tense, number, possession, and negation.</li> </ul>
Speaks with a limited repertoire of phrase and sentence structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses mostly simple sentence construction. Overuses <i>and</i> to connect thoughts.</li> </ul>
Has difficulty organizing what to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has problems giving directions or explaining a recipe; talks around the topic (circumlocutes), but doesn't get to the point.</li> </ul>
Has trouble maintaining a topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interjects irrelevant information into a story.</li> <li>• Starts out discussing one thing and then goes off in another direction without making the connection.</li> </ul>
Has difficulty with word retrieval.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can't call forth a known word when it is needed and may use fillers, such as "<i>ummm</i>," and "<i>You know</i>."</li> <li>• May substitute a word related in meaning or sound, as in <i>boat</i> for <i>submarine</i> or <i>selfish</i> for <i>bashful</i>.</li> <li>• May use an "empty word," such as <i>thing</i> or <i>stuff</i>.</li> <li>• May describe rather than name, as in <i>a boat that goes underwater</i>.</li> </ul>
Has trouble with the pragmatic or social use of language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not follow rules of conversation like turn-taking.</li> <li>• Does not switch styles of speaking when addressing different people.</li> </ul>

## Mathematics Difficulties

In some instances, individuals with LD have normal or above-normal mathematic skills. For others, mathematics is the primary area of disability or an area of disability in addition to other problems, such as reading disabilities. “Dyscalculia” is a term occasionally used to refer to problems in mathematics. An individual with LD may have one or more of the following characteristics:

Math Characteristics	Examples
Doesn't remember and/or retrieve math facts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uses a calculator or counts on fingers for answers to simple problems; e.g., <math>2 \times 5</math>.</li></ul>
Doesn't use visual imagery effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can't do math in his/her head and writes down even simple problems. Has difficulty making change.</li></ul>
Has visual-spatial deficits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confuses math symbols.</li><li>• Misreads numbers.</li><li>• Doesn't interpret graphs or tables accurately.</li><li>• Has trouble maintaining a checkbook.</li></ul>
Becomes confused with math operations, especially multi-step processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leaves out steps in math problem-solving or does them in the wrong order.</li><li>• Can't do long division except with a calculator.</li><li>• Has trouble budgeting.</li></ul>
Has difficulties in language processing that affect the ability to do math problem-solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doesn't translate real-life problems into the appropriate mathematical processes. Avoids employment situations which involve this set of skills.</li></ul>

## Thinking Difficulties

Although adults with LD do not have global difficulties in thinking, they may have specific problems in cognitive processing. These may include one or more of the following characteristics:

Thinking Characteristics	Examples
Has problems with abstract reasoning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asks to see ideas on paper.</li><li>• Prefers hands-on ways of learning new ideas.</li></ul>
Shows marked rigidity in thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resists new ideas or ways of doing things and may have difficulty adjusting to changes on the job.</li></ul>
Thinking is random as opposed to orderly, either in logic or chronology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May have good ideas which seem disjointed, unrelated, or out of sequence.</li></ul>
Has difficulty synthesizing ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pays too much attention to detail and misses the big picture or idea when encountering specific situations at home or at work.</li></ul>
Makes impulsive decisions and judgments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Shoots from the hip” when arriving at conclusions or decisions. Doesn’t use a structured approach to weigh options.</li></ul>
Has difficulty generating strategies to acquire/use information and solve problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approaches situations without a game plan, acting without a guiding set of principles.</li></ul>

## Other Difficulties

An individual with LD may have problems in addition to those listed above. These may include one or more of the following characteristics:

Characteristics	Examples
Has problems with attention, which may be accompanied by hyperactivity, distractibility, or passivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't focus on a task for an appropriate length of time.</li> <li>• Can't seem to get things done.</li> <li>• Does better with short tasks.</li> </ul>
Displays poor organizational skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't know where to begin tasks or how to proceed.</li> <li>• Doesn't work within time limits, failing to meet deadlines.</li> <li>• Work space and personal space are messy.</li> </ul>
Has eye-hand coordination problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omits or substitutes elements when copying information from one place to another, as in invoices or schedules.</li> </ul>
Demonstrates poor fine motor control, usually accompanied by poor handwriting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids jobs requiring manipulation of small items.</li> <li>• Becomes frustrated when putting together toys for children.</li> </ul>
Lacks social perception.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stands too close to people when conversing.</li> <li>• Doesn't perceive situations accurately. May laugh when something serious is happening or slap an unreceptive boss on the back in an attempt to be friendly.</li> </ul>
Has problems establishing social relationships. Problems may be related to spoken language disorders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not seem to know how to act and what to say to people in specific social situations and may withdraw from socializing.</li> </ul>
Lacks "executive functions," including self-motivation, self-reliance, self-advocacy, and goal-setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates over reliance on others for assistance or fails to ask for help when appropriate.</li> <li>• Blames external factors on lack of success.</li> <li>• Doesn't set personal goals and work deliberately to achieve them.</li> <li>• Expresses helplessness.</li> </ul>

## **TECHNIQUES: Working with Adults with Learning Disabilities**

### **Prepared by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center**

Research on teaching techniques for adults with learning disabilities is limited. The majority of research on learning disabilities instruction has focused on children, and these techniques do not necessarily work well with adults. The following is a list of teaching techniques that have been suggested as effective with adults who have suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities. This list is not all inclusive, but it does provide suggestions for techniques and methods that may be useful in teaching adult learners.

Instructors and students should agree on the expected outcome of a program. They both should be involved in developing work plans on how they expect to reach the student's goals. The following techniques may help to improve student involvement:

- Help set realistic goals.
- Set short-term goals so the student can experience immediate success.
- Consider meeting in a variety of ways. Be creative and flexible.
- Involve the student in determining how to evaluate specific goals.
- Involve students in the evaluation of their progress.
- Get adult students tested for hearing and vision problems, if necessary.
- Talk with students about what techniques work best for them.
- Develop a written work plan with learners and make sure they fully understand it.
- Discover what truly interests the learner through listening, discussions, and observations.
- Respect the uniqueness of each individual.
- Encourage risk-taking.
- Help students identify techniques that might be helpful in accommodating their learning disabilities.

Before students can begin assignments, they have to understand the instructions. The following techniques may help instructors introduce lessons effectively:

- Tape record or video tape the instructions.
- Make announcements in both oral and written forms--especially changes in the schedule, directions, assignments, or exams.
- Have a model of the finished product available for review.
- Show by example.
- Make directions specific, concrete, and understandable.
- Give a number of options for completing assignments.
- Tell your student what the whole lesson will concern, and explain what will be done first, second, and so on.
- Review major points of previous sessions. Preview main points to be covered. Outline both in several ways: written on the board, presented orally, and outlined in a handout.
- Make clear transitions from one task to another.

The key to effective teaching is to identify and employ techniques and methods that work with students. It is easier for instructors to adjust their teaching methods than it is for students to change the way they learn. The following suggestions may help instructors reach adult learners:

- Build on strengths rather than repeating weaknesses.
- Make eye contact frequently; this helps in maintaining attention and encouraging participation.
- Teach new concepts by relating them to practical applications.
- Be sure reading material is at the right level for the learner.
- Be sure print type is large enough.
- Relate material to everyday situations.
- Use language experience approaches and reading materials from the home and work environment to stimulate interest.
- Build on what the student already knows, making learning developmental, not remedial.
- Probe “incorrect” responses to discover thought processes.
- Teach students to correct their own mistakes.
- Do not assume that the learner knows something until you ask or teach it.
- Be creative and attempt to vary your teaching style.
- Encourage students to sit in the front of the classroom where they can hear well and have a clear view of the chalkboard.
- Keep the learning environment free of visual and auditory distraction.
- Establish a routine; this promotes organization and consistency.
- Use multi-sensory strategies to present materials: many learners must see, say, hear, and touch before they can develop full mental images that stick and make sense.
- Provide short-term tasks with short breaks between tasks.
- Be flexible with time schedules: work quotas should be adjusted to fit the work speed of each learner.
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- Repeat the activity until learning is accomplished, and provide opportunities to review.
- Vary your lessons, reteaching and reviewing in varieties of ways.
- Respect different learning styles.
- Use materials that relate to an individual’s experiences.
- Change an activity when it is not working.
- De-emphasize timed tests.
- Incorporate keyboards (word processors or typewriters) into the lesson as much as possible. Studies show that some learners can produce 15 times more writing with a word processor than they can with a pen or pencil.
- Use formulas or rhymes to assist the memory.
- Encourage the use of learning aids and tools (e.g., calculators, highlighter pens, extra worksheets, computerized learning programs, records, tape recorders, films, demonstrations, maps, charts, experiences, fingers, and rulers).
- Use color whenever possible for visual impact.
- Provide the student opportunities to repeat verbally what has been taught as a check for accuracy.
- Work with other teachers and professionals and ask for ideas or opinions.
- Encourage the learner to find a mentor in addition to the tutor. The mentor can help the learner review information and apply classroom skills to practical situations.
- Suggest Reinforcement activities to be used at home, e.g. posting new words on the refrigerator door, repeated listening to a tape of vocabulary words, watching recommended educational television programs.
- Talk with students about their learning process. Ask them what does and does not work for them.

The better students feel about their learning experience, the harder they try. A positive environment will foster self-esteem in students, encouraging them to return. Consider the following when working with adult students:

- Pay attention to self-concept enhancement when working with disabled students.
- Do not embarrass, or insinuate laziness, or discourage an individual publicly or privately.
- Reduce emphasis on competition and perfection.
- Praise the learner's accomplishments at the end of every session.
- Communicate to students that you value them through smiling, listening, and eye contact.
- Incorporate a sense of humor into the learning process.
- Praise what you might consider small or minor successes.
- Emphasize students' strengths and encourage them to exercise them.
- Reinforce the effort and progress of the student.
- Teach to each student's strengths and make each student a "star" as often as possible.

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