

# The Warning Signs of Learning Disabilities

Although children's growth patterns vary among individuals and within individuals, uneven development or significant delays in development can signal the presence of LD. It is important to keep in mind that the behaviors listed below must persist over time to be considered warning signs. Any child may occasionally exhibit one or two of these behaviors in the course of normal development.

## Warning Signs in Preschool Children

### Language

- \* Slow development in speaking words or sentences
- \* Pronunciation problems
- \* Difficulty learning new words
- \* Difficulty following simple directions
- \* Difficulty understanding questions
- \* Difficulty expressing wants and desires
- \* Difficulty rhyming words
- \* Lack of interest in story telling

### Motor Skills

- \* Clumsiness
- \* Poor balance
- \* Difficulty manipulating small objects
- \* Awkwardness with running, jumping, or climbing
- \* Trouble learning to tie shoes, button shirts, or perform other self-help activities
- \* Avoidance of drawing or tracing

### Cognition

- \* Trouble memorizing the alphabet or days of the week
- \* Poor memory for what should be routine (everyday) procedures

- \* Difficulty with cause and effect, sequencing, and counting
- \* Difficulty with basic concepts such as size, shape, color

### Attention

- \* High distractibility
- \* Impulsive behavior
- \* Unusual restlessness (hyperactivity)
- \* Difficulty staying on task
- \* Difficulty changing activities
- \* Constant repetition of an idea, inability to move on to a new idea (perseveration)

### Social Behavior

- \* Trouble interacting with others, playing alone
- \* Prone to sudden and extreme mood changes
- \* Easily frustrated
- \* Hard to manage, has temper tantrums

## Warning Signs in Elementary School Children

Warning signs for this age group may include any of those listed above for preschool children in addition to the following.

### Language/Mathematics

- \* Slow learning of the correspondence of sound to letter.
- \* Consistent errors in reading or spelling
- \* Difficulty remembering basic sight words
- \* Inability to retell a story in sequence
- \* Trouble learning to tell time or count money
- \* Confusion of math signs (+, -, x, /, =)
- \* Transposition of number sequences

- \* Trouble memorizing math facts
- \* Trouble with place value
- \* Difficulty remembering the steps of mathematic operations such as long division

### **Motor Skills**

- \* Poor coordination, or awkwardness
- \* Difficulty copying from chalkboard
- \* Difficulty aligning columns (math)
- \* Poor handwriting

### **Attention/Organization**

- \* Difficulty concentrating or focusing on a task
- \* Difficulty finishing work on time
- \* Inability to follow multiple directions
- \* Unusual sloppiness, carelessness
- \* Poor concept of direction (left, right)
- \* Rejection of new concepts, or changes in routine

### **Social Behavior**

- \* Difficulty understanding facial expressions or gestures
- \* Difficulty understanding social situations
- \* Tendency to misinterpret behavior of peers and/or adults
- \* Apparent lack of "common sense"

## **Warning Signs in Secondary School Students**

### **Language/Mathematics/Social Studies**

- \* Avoidance of reading and writing
- \* Tendency to misread information
- \* Difficulty summarizing
- \* Poor reading comprehension
- \* Difficulty understanding subject area textbooks
- \* Trouble with open-ended questions
- \* Continued poor spelling
- \* Poor grasp of abstract concepts
- \* Poor skills in writing essays
- \* Difficulty in learning foreign language
- \* Poor ability to apply math skills

### **Attention/Organization**

- \* Difficulty staying organized
- \* Trouble with test formats such as multiple choice
- \* Slow work pace in class and in testing situations
- \* Poor note taking skills
- \* Poor ability to proofread or double check work

### **Social Behavior**

- \* Difficulty accepting criticism
- \* Difficulty seeking or giving feedback
- \* Problems negotiating or advocating for oneself
- \* Difficulty resisting peer pressure
- \* Difficulty understanding another person's perspectives