

Chapter 1

Learning Disabilities

A. Overview

No two students with learning disabilities are exactly alike. Symptoms range from mild to severe. No student with LD will have all of the possible characteristics listed below, and some will have only a few. When a student self-identifies to the disability service office, DS officers must keep the information confidential unless the student agrees that it should be shared with his professors or others on campus. And the student is not required to explain his specific condition to his professors, although some may choose to do so. Professors are expected to keep information about the student's disability — or even that he has a disability — confidential.

Possible student characteristics

- Reading comprehension difficulties (this impacts all academic subjects).
- Listening difficulties (problems picking out key points; distractible; problems understanding what's being said, etc.).
- Writing problems (speed of writing; legibility problems, etc.).
- Math problems (may include math anxiety; dyscalculia; difficulty comprehending word problems; difficulty focusing on a single problem if there are many on the page, etc.).
- Social problems (immature; inappropriate comments; difficulty interacting in small or large group activities; difficulty interpreting social cues, etc.).
- ADD/ADHD (difficulty in focusing; overactivity; inappropriate comments, etc.).
- Organizational problems (this impacts completing projects, doing homework, taking notes, engaging in social and academic activities, etc.).
- Time management problems (including getting assignments done, allocating enough time for social and academic activities, etc.).
- Psychological problems (difficulty maintaining relationships; lack of self-esteem, etc.).

Possible accommodations

Decisions as to appropriate accommodations should be made on a case-by-case basis. No particular accommodations are appropriate for all students, but below are some common ones offered students with learning disabilities.

- Note-taker.
- Quiet room for testing.
- Alternate testing formats (oral, projects, portfolios, application term papers, etc.).
- Seating in the least distractible area of the classroom (away from the doorway, pencil sharpener, etc.).
- Extended time for tests.
- Lecture outline provided ahead of time.

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Faculty Training Tips

- Extended time for projects (But this should be used sparingly. Students with LD need breaks from academic work between terms just as regular students do and they often have problems with time management.).
- Course substitutions (e.g., logic for a math course; American Sign Language for a language course, etc.).