

## What are learning difficulties?

When a child is having trouble at school or with studying, he or she may suffer from learning difficulties.

**LEARNING DIFFICULTIES** mean that a person learns new skills exceptionally slowly. For example, learning to read or count may not progress as quickly as for others.

Learning difficulties are quite common

The difficulties are frequently congenital.

- Learning difficulties cannot be caused by the child.
- The difficulties are not due to laziness or stupidity.
- Slow learning is not caused by learning difficulties if the person has not received tuition or does not know the teaching language sufficiently well.

It is important to diagnose learning difficulties. After diagnosis, learning can be promoted and supported in many ways.

## With whom to discuss learning difficulties?

**Children under school age:** maternity clinic, day care

**Schoolchildren:** teacher, special education teacher, school psychologist, school nurse, school physician

**Adults:** special education teacher at place of study, own physician, learning difficulty associations and organisations

**EXAMPLES OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

<p><b>Difficulties with reading and writing, dyslexia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading is slow and/or error-prone</li> <li>• spelling errors when writing</li> <li>• difficulties with understanding what is read</li> <li>• learning other languages is frequently difficult</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mathematical learning difficulties</b></p> <p>Difficulties with tasks such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning to do sums and multiplications in one's head</li> <li>• reading and understanding large numbers and their meanings</li> <li>• converting centimetres into metres</li> </ul>
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**THE FOLLOWING DIFFICULTIES MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

<p><b>Linguistic difficulties</b></p> <p>Difficulties with tasks such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• following another person's speech</li> <li>• understanding complex or long sentences</li> <li>• finding the right words</li> <li>• hearing and pronouncing words correctly</li> </ul>	<p><b>Difficulties with perception</b></p> <p>Difficulties with tasks such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• looking at and understanding images, tables or the clock</li> <li>• finding one's way in unfamiliar surroundings</li> <li>• following teaching on the blackboard</li> </ul>
<p><b>Difficulties with motor functions</b></p> <p>Basic motor skills: control of all movements is clumsy</p> <p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stumbling or staggering while moving</li> <li>• difficulties in maintaining one's balance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Difficulties with motor functions</b></p> <p>Fine motor skills: difficulties with manual tasks</p> <p>Difficulties with tasks such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drawing or colouring precisely</li> <li>• grasping small objects with appropriate force</li> <li>• manipulating small objects smoothly (e.g. pen use, tying shoe laces)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Difficulties with paying attention</b></p> <p>Difficulties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concentrating</li> <li>• planning actions</li> <li>• sitting still</li> <li>• working in a group</li> <li>• finishing tasks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Memory difficulties</b></p> <p>Difficulties with tasks such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning and remembering new words</li> <li>• remembering long instructions or stories heard</li> <li>• visual learning, such as from maps or patterns</li> <li>• learning new sequences of movements or ways of acting</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extensive learning difficulties</b></p> <p>Trouble at school in many subjects. Other potential symptoms include difficulties with social relationships, everyday tasks or coping at work.</p>	